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PLACE:

LONDON

DATE:

1832

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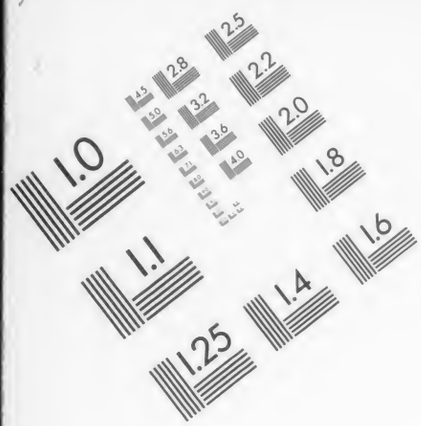

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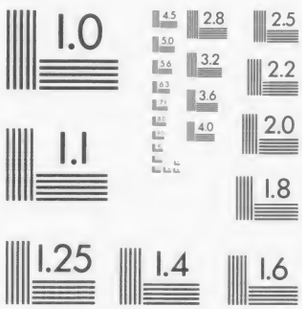

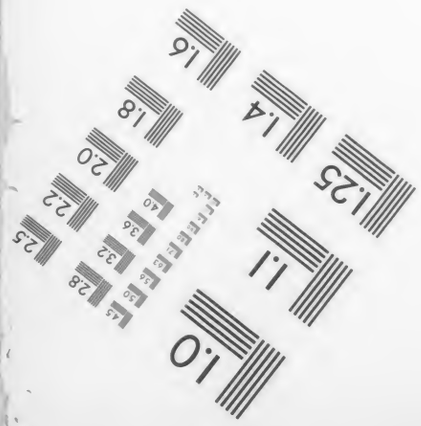

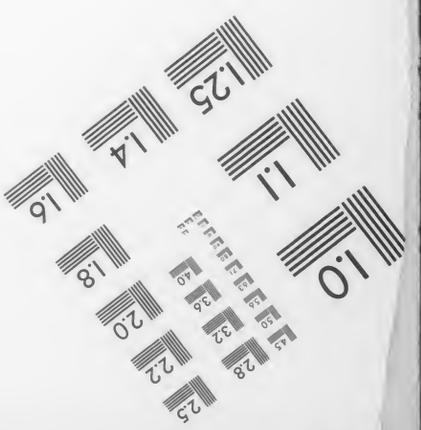

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No. 7

TWO LETTERS,

BY

"FIAT JUSTITIA,"

AUTHOR OF A LETTER TO THE HON. & REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL;

IN REPLY,

THE FIRST,

TO A CHURCHMAN, WHO CONDEMNS HIM FOR GOING TOO FAR;

THE SECOND,

TO A DISSENTER, WHO EXPOSTULATES WITH HIM FOR NOT GOING FAR ENOUGH.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING

A LETTER FROM THE HON. AND REV. BAPTIST W. NOEL,
WITH OBSERVATIONS UPON IT;
REMARKS ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH; CHURCH-COMMUNION;
ECCLESIASTICAL ENDOWMENTS;
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INDEPENDENCY, &c. &c.

CONCLUDING WITH

HINTS ON CHURCH REFORM,

AS APPLICABLE TO CONGREGATIONALISTS.

"We must remember that our obligation is to keep within the mean, betwixt uncharitable bitterness and pernicious flattery, not yielding to worldly respects, nor offending Christian modesty .... according to the wholesome advice of St. Gregory Nazianzen in these divine words: 'We do not affect peace with prejudice of the true doctrine, that so we may get a name of being gentle and mild; and yet we seek to conserve peace, fighting in a lawful manner, and containing ourselves within our compass and the rule of spirit. And of these things my judgment is, and for my part, I prescribe the same care to all that deal with souls and treat of true doctrine; that neither they exasperate men's minds by harshness, nor make them haughty and insolent by submission;' but that in the cause of faith they behave themselves prudently and advisedly, and do not *in either of these things* exceed the mean."—*Chillingworth's Works.*

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MDCCCXXXII.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Two or three months since, the Author of these pages received, through his publisher, a printed paper, entitled, "A Brief Reply to the Letter addressed by 'Fiat Justitia' to the Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel, by a Layman. London: published by L. B. Seeley and Sons, 169, Fleet Street." His first feeling was to throw it aside. The letter to Mr. Noel, like other ephemeral productions, had breathed its little day, and was gone: the public had forgotten it; and the Author did not think that the "Reply" contained any thing of sufficient importance to require him to make a demand upon the recollections of his readers. Afterwards, however, it occurred to him, that as a Resolution at a public meeting is often made a mere "peg to hang a speech upon," he might make a similar use of the communication he had received, especially as he had by him a letter from a Dissenter which he had not answered, and which he might take that opportunity to notice. He has done so.

He has replied to both his correspondents, and has thrown together thoughts and reflections of various kinds,—all, however, connected, more or less, with topics universally felt to be interesting and important at the present crisis.

He has written, he trusts he can say, to serve the interests of no party; but with a simple desire to contribute his mite to the cause of truth. He thinks it probable that some of *both* the great parties to which his remarks refer, will read them; but he does *not* think that either will be satisfied. Some Churchmen may like to know what is said to the Dissenter, and some Dissenters what is said to the Churchman; but neither, perhaps, may like what is said about themselves. The Author cannot help this, however much he may regret it: he certainly did not write for the sake of pleasing either the one or the other; but neither was it his intention willingly to offend them: and if he should be so unfortunate as to be reproached by both, he will endeavour to find support in the consciousness that, whether he "*please* men" or not, it is his desire and aim to unite love to the persons of all, without indulgence to the errors of any.

18, St. Paul's Church-Yard,
September 7, 1832.

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LETTER I.

TO THE CHURCHMAN.

LETTER I.

TO THE CHURCHMAN, IN ANSWER TO "A BRIEF REPLY."

SIR,

A FEW weeks ago I received your letter, professing to be a reply to one which I had addressed about twelve months before to the Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel. For some time after reading your communication, I not only doubted whether it became me to notice it, but I really felt it difficult to determine whether you were serious. I was inclined to consider the thing as a mere joke, hardly supposing that you could mean your remarks to be taken for arguments, or expect them to be regarded and treated as such. At length, however, I thought it best to give you the benefit of my doubt; and to regard you as having no intention to take a liberty or to commit an impertinence. Concluding, therefore, that you offered your observations sincerely believing that there was something in them, I felt that to such a belief I owed a portion of respect. I endeavoured to express that respect, by calmly examining the

force of your suggestions; and my deliberate judgment upon them was this—that I should not be censured by any impartial person, capable of comprehending the argument of my former Letter, if I took no notice whatever of yours. This was, and this is still, my opinion. I happen to have reasons, however, quite distinct from any such opinion, for animadverting on your "Reply;" and on account of these I intend to notice it.

I shall insert every paragraph of your letter; and will meet each as it shall seem to me that justice and candour may demand. I shall study to use nothing but fair argument; and I hope I shall do so in a Christian spirit. I feel, however, that this would have been more easy, if *your* spirit had awakened my esteem, and your production itself entitled you to respect.

You begin,—

"SIR,

"In a letter addressed by you to the Hon. and "Rev. Baptist W. Noel, you say that there are "Socinians in the Established Church, *Clergy who "preach Socinianism:* by which I understand you "to mean Clergy who in their sermons delivered "from its pulpits, deny the Divinity of Our Lord "and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Now, Sir, as I feel the charge which you have "brought against the Church to be a most im-"portant one; and as 'FIAT JUSTITIA' is my motto

"as well as yours; I am willing, on my part, upon "your doing the same, to deposit One Hundred "Pounds with some third person; and, on pain "of forfeiting that sum, do you, Sir, engage to "produce *legal* evidence in proof of the truth "of your accusation, and I will engage that the "Clergy whom you accuse of preaching Socinian-"ism shall, on such evidence being adduced, be "interdicted from doing so; and, in case of per-"severance therein, be deposed."

A challenge like this is, perhaps, hardly quite consistent with the dignity of a Christian argument: if any one, however, choose to meet a statement respecting a matter of fact, by proposing a forfeit of the nature of a bet or a wager, his right to do so is, I suppose, unquestionable; though, respecting the taste betrayed by such a proposition, there may, very probably, be different opinions.

If I understand the proposal you make to me, it is this:—upon my failure to produce a certain kind of evidence in proof of a certain thing, I am to have the "pain" of forfeiting "One Hundred Pounds;" the money will cease to be mine and become yours;—not that I think you will put it in your pocket, for though you are totally unknown to me, I will not believe you would do this; you would enjoy the satisfaction, I suppose, of devoting it to some charitable object. If I *do* produce that evidence, however,—what then? From the terms

of your challenge, I do not see that I am to enjoy the same satisfaction—to have power over the disposal of the same sum forfeited by you. It would rather appear, I think, that you would consider *your* "pain" to consist in procuring a certain exercise of episcopal authority. This might cost you "One Hundred Pounds," or it might not. Now, I do not feel certain whether, according to the laws of wagers and forfeits (of which I am totally ignorant), the conditions you propose are perfectly equitable. I have no doubt you meant them to be so; and, if I felt myself bound in honour to accept the challenge, I do not know that I should quarrel with the terms.

I do *not* consider myself bound to accept it. I will tell you why; and I am not without hope that you will yourself candidly admit, after reading my remarks, that, however you might wish the contrary, I am free from any "*legal*" obligation to listen to your proposal.

I do not wish to be tedious; but you have compelled me to be particular. Your whole letter is a logical mistake; it demands therefore that I should enter into more minute explanations, than would have been required in another case—in that, for instance, of a person who, with average capacity, had perused my remarks with candour or carefulness.

My argument, throughout the whole of my letter to Mr. Noel, was an *argumentum ad hominem*—an argument, I am well aware, more adapted to silence an

adversary than to elicit truth;—it was all, however, that I required in prosecuting the purposes of that publication. It was not my object either to enter into the Bible Society controversy, or to discuss the question of religious establishments. My argument might have been conducted by any man of any church or of any creed; for it was not intended to establish *the speculative right or wrong* of any *opinions*, but to shew the *practical inconsistency* of the *advocates* of certain opinions. This might have been done by one who either believed or disbelieved these opinions; who sided with their advocates or their opponents; or who looked with equal indifference upon both. It occurred to me to pursue it; and my letter to Mr. Noel was the result.

Mr. N. and his friends described themselves as abhorring the idea of any connexion whatever with Socinians; they dreaded the thought of affording the least sanction to men who taught Socinianism; they dared not, as a matter of conscience, come into contact with them, lest they should support the delusion of their being ministers of Christ. To give to this conscientiousness a proper direction and a healthy character, I referred to what I considered to be a fact; namely, that, in *another* society to which these gentlemen belonged, there were persons whose sentiments were precisely the same as those of the individuals with whom, in the Bible Society, they felt it to be a grievance and a sin to associate.

Now, this statement seemed to me to be warranted by my knowledge of books published by Clergymen, in which Socinian and Arian errors were insinuated or avowed; and by my recollection of individuals who had been known to hold these errors, one of whom I particularly remembered as having been, while he lived, not only a professed Socinian, but an annual subscriber to a Socinian association. Such knowledge and such recollections I considered sufficient to sustain an appeal to the consistency of Mr. N. and his friends. Feeling, however, that "the fact of clerical Socinianism might be denied;" or that, though known or believed, it might be difficult "legally" to establish it, *I gave it up*—I gave it up in my argument, and made my appeal rest upon another class of the Clergy altogether. Now, from these circumstances, the fair and honest conclusion seems to me to be this:—as I did not come forward with a statement of the Socinianism of the Clergy by way of "accusation" against the Church, but merely took what I considered to be notorious to all who had a tolerable acquaintance with books and men on which to ground a specific appeal to certain persons; and also as, in the course of my remarks, I voluntarily abandoned that ground and occupied another; on these accounts, I do not think that I can be regarded as bound in honour to accept the challenge which you have proposed.

In concluding this part of my letter, I would

farther remark, that had I not changed the ground of my argument, I am not sure that I should have considered myself, even then, bound to accept your proposal. You must be perfectly aware, Sir, that the opinion of some of the Clergy being Socinians is very general. You know very well that it is not a charge originating with me. A member of parliament and a thorough churchman, one who has all his life been moving in a society not at all given to fabricate "accusations" against the Church, admitted to me lately, in a casual correspondence, that even *he* had heard of cases of clerical Socinianism, and farther, that he understood and feared that the present ministry had made a Socinian a bishop: he added, indeed (which I think it proper to mention), that he had not a personal *knowledge* of the truth of these statements. He had not, I suppose, "*legal*" evidence in support of all that he had heard; but I refer to the circumstance, merely to shew that the impression respecting this form of clerical delinquency, is much more general than any one from reading your challenge would imagine: and, in fact, that it is sufficiently so to constitute the ground of an appeal to persons who take to themselves the credit of high conscientiousness. High conscientiousness, Sir, is not shewn by a demand for "legal" evidence to assist its decisions; its motto and its maxim may be supposed to be embodied in these words: "When an action is *doubtful*, abstain from it."

Besides, Sir, you must admit that it might be difficult to adduce "legal" evidence in proof of the Socinianism of a clergyman, though he might be universally known to have embraced Socinianism. Such a man's ministry might be a constant, systematic concealment of the truth, rather than the direct inculcation of error; he might involve and insinuate his opinions rather than express them; he might "preach Socinianism," not by "denying" the divinity of Christ, in so many words, but by never speaking of anything beyond his character and virtues as a man. How did Paley preach his Arianism?—Not by a direct attack upon the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of the Son of God, but by a sly sapping and undermining of the orthodox faith—by a quiet infusion of heresy into the minds of his unsuspecting and deluded hearers, referring for support, all the time, to the authority of a bishop! "The scripture doctrine," says he, "concerning our Lord, seems to be this, that, when his appointed commission and his sufferings were closed upon earth, *he was advanced in heaven to a still higher state than what he possessed before he came into the world.** This point, as well as the glory of his nature, both before and after his appearance in the flesh, is attested by St. Paul, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. 'Being in the

* See Sherlock's Sermons on Phil. ii. 9.

form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.' He did not affect to be equal with God, or to appear with divine honours (for such is the sense which the words in the original will bear), 'but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.' 'Wherefore,' *i. e.* for this his obedience, even to the last extremity, even unto death, 'God also hath highly exalted him;' or, as it is distinctly and perspicuously expressed in the original, 'God also hath *more* highly exalted him,' that is, *to a higher state than what he even before possessed.*"* What, Sir, are the inferences from all this? What is involved in it? What are the sentiments calmly and covertly insinuated? Heresy, Sir, rank heresy, taking for the standard the Articles of your Church, and the opinion of the persons I addressed in my Letter. This passage from Paley *implies*, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a falsehood; that Christ was not God; that, in fact, the Redeemer of the Church was a *creature*, in his pre-existent essence, if I may so speak, capable of advancement. Paley does not *say* all this in so many words, but he *means* it, and he "preaches" it—in spite of his public reading of the Athanasian Creed, and his solemn subscription to the First

* Paley's Works, vol. v. pp. 189, 190.

and Second Articles. Now, Sir, all this is Arianism, a thing which the advocates for exclusion in the Bible Society condemned, as equally atrocious with Socinianism itself. Is it not probable, think you—is it not certain—that there are now those among the clergy, who, in a quiet way, after the example of this celebrated man, introduce into the minds of the people such and similar errors, though it might be difficult to produce proof of their doing so, which you, or the judges in a spiritual court, might pronounce to be "legal?"

These last two paragraphs, observe, I consider as supplementary to my direct reply to your challenge. I repeat what I have said, that, though I know Socinianism has been preached from the pulpits of the Establishment, and believe that from some of its pulpits it is preached still, yet, from the reasons I have assigned, I regard myself as by no means bound to adduce to you a certain kind of evidence in proof of the fact.

Your next remark is,

"You contend, that Socinians, by being com-
"pelled to pay church-rates and taxes, levied for
"the building of churches, are constituted mem-
"bers of the Church; and that Mr. Phillips and
"Mr. Howels, on the principle of Mr. Noel's
"amendment, acknowledge Socinians as fellow-
"workers in the same cause, so long as they
"consent to remain in connexion with a Church

"to promoting the interests of which the property
"of Socinians is applied.

"Sir, I conceive that, whether resident in
"England, France, Turkey, or Japan, it is the
"duty of a Christian to pay the rates and taxes
"imposed by the Government under which he
"lives: and I do not conceive that by paying
"them he is constituted a member of the Church
"of that country, or a fellow-worker with its
"ministers."

This passage shews the flagrant inattention with which you must have read my former letter. I have first to set you right as to a matter of fact; and then to try to make you comprehend the nature of an argument.

You talk of Mr. Noel's amendment, and of my appealing to Mr. Howels and Mr. Phillips, on the principle of that amendment. Now, Mr. Noel did not propose an amendment at all; and it was *not* on the principle of any amendment with which Mr. N. was concerned, that I appealed to Mr. Howels and Mr. Phillips; and both these things are distinctly stated in the 22nd page of my letter!

Mr. Noel supported an amendment proposed by the Rev. W. Foot, which permitted the contributions and membership of Socinians, but excluded them from office, in the Bible Society. Mr. Phillips and Mr. Howels supported the amend-

ment of Mr. Gordon, which went to exclude Socinians both from office and from membership: *this* was urged upon us by arguments which were intended to prove that all pecuniary assistance, for circulating the Scriptures, coming from such persons, ought, as a matter of principle and conscience, to be declined. For themselves, the men professed that they could not touch it without contamination;—to take it, would be to make God's enemies fellow-workers with them in God's cause.

Now, Sir, in defence of the observations addressed in the "Letter," to the advocates of this opinion, I must again remind you, that they contain an *argumentum ad hominem*, and nothing else. They are an appeal to certain men, *on their own principles*, and to them only. They are addressed to no other men, and contemplate no other principles. If, in any of the expressions, other principles are accidentally referred to, they may be passed over without injuring the integrity of the argument. I will shew you the nature, and repeat to you the substance of that argument, and then fairly and manfully meet it, and answer it.

I do not enter into the general question of the right of Governments to impose taxes for religious purposes, the obligation of Christians to pay them, nor into any general question whatever. I hold no argument with men who consider a

National Church as, in all countries, a necessary institution, and Christianity as the "blessed accident" of our own. I have nothing to do with those who sincerely believe that they ought to approve and obey whatever they find established, and who are conscientiously "subject," in all things, both religious and civil, "to the powers that be." I have nothing to do with those who defend an establishment on the principle of "expediency;" and who are fully persuaded that they ought to support such an institution as the best instrument for doing the greatest good upon the whole. I have nothing to do with men (if there be such) who say, as Paley is reported to have said, that "they are too poor to keep a conscience;" and who, therefore, violate their settled convictions for the sake of "filthy lucre," or honourable office. I have nothing to do with any one of these men, or with any of the principles they avow: my appeal rests altogether upon other grounds; and is made to men who not only profess "to keep a conscience," but who seem to suppose that every body else has got rid of such a troublesome companion.

The men, then, to whom I exclusively referred, professed what I have told you. They described themselves as compelled to do what they did, by their serious and conscientious convictions. They affirmed that they could not, as they valued their salvation, sanction a society which accepted the

money of Socinians to circulate the Bible. To circulate the Bible was the work of God, and none but God's people should be permitted to engage in it. As to the "*expediency*" of the measure — the idea of thus increasing the funds of the society, and thereby extending its usefulness—the notion was treated with indignant contempt. The principle of expediency was thrown from them with abhorrence: to think of procuring money, on such a principle, for the promotion of any thing like a religious work, was considered as insulting to that God to whom "the silver and the gold belonged" — with a great deal more to the same purpose.

Now, Sir, to men of such principles, and with such conscientiousness, I put this case:—suppose the Government of the country were so to legislate upon this matter, that Socinians would be bound to subscribe to the Bible Society; and that you would be compelled to receive their money, and thus to associate them with you in your work:—suppose this; and then, with your conscientious convictions, what could you do? An act of the legislature could not make that *right*, which you affirm is scripturally wrong;—it could not alter the nature, or diminish the force of a moral obligation. *On your principles*, submission to such an enactment would be sin: you could do nothing, to be consistent with yourselves, but dissent from the Bible Society when thus corrupted, and nobly

determine, at all hazards, "to obey God rather than man." And now, Sir, can *you* tell me, what, under the circumstances supposed, these gentlemen, with *their* consciences, could do *but* dissent? Will you procure from Mr. Howels, or Mr. Phillips, or Mr. Melville, or any of those who have been conscientiously compelled to treat, with pious abhorrence or bitter scorn, the idea of receiving the property of the Socinian for circulating the Bible—will you procure from any of them, a fair, manly statement of what they would conceive to be their duty, under the imaginary circumstances to which I have referred?

But now for the reality. The Church of the living God is an institution of, at least, *as* religious a character as the Bible Society. Building churches; maintaining them; placing Bibles in them to be read and explained; providing the bread and wine for the sacrament—all this is a work *as* religious, as procuring "the paper and sheepskin," which make a Bible, or defraying the expenses of its printing and circulation. It is very evident, that supposing Messrs. Howels, Phillips, and Melville, to be the ministers of a church managing itself, they never could permit the money of Socinians to be received for the purposes specified; — and still less could they permit Socinians to have the liberty of attending the vestry-meetings of such a Church, and voting upon all questions connected with funds raised so emphatically for the service

of religion and the glory of God: and still farther, if any power were to interfere, and to enact that they *should* thus defile their consciences, by permitting the Socinians to do all this, it is very evident, from the noble manner in which the men have spoken on the subject, that they never would permit any such thing;—they might be fined, or imprisoned, or burnt, but as to touching the money of the heretic, that, with them, is out of the question. *And yet they do touch it.* The sacred edifices belonging to the Church, of which these gentlemen are ministers, are built, repaired, maintained, by the money of the Socinian, the infidel, and the deist;—they admit, here, the co-operation of the very men whose assistance they conscientiously reject in the Bible Society! Now, Sir, where *is* the consistency of this? How do you reconcile what they do with what they profess? Is it possible to look at both, without losing your respect either for their character or their understanding?

Remember, Sir, that these men have nothing to do with arguments from "expediency," in support of a national Church, which, as a matter of necessity, must, in order to a general good, commit the particular evil of combining the infidel and the believer in the promotion of the cause of God. These men are superior, also, to the paltry quibble which might be brought to their relief, that the Socinian contributes to the Church as a parishioner,

as an Englishman, a subject of the state and so on; they *know* that this cannot alter the case to one of acute moral sensibility. They have given up every argument in relation to the conduct of religious bodies but what is founded upon Scripture, and can be approved by conscience. They have nothing to do with general reasonings and nice calculations. They have abandoned the ground of expediency and policy. They profess to act upon high principle. They plead their *conscience* for what they say:—to their conscience I appeal in relation to what they do. If you, Sir, continue their defence, will you calmly and fairly meet that appeal?

To assist you to meet it without such a mistake of the question as you have committed in your present letter, permit me to add, that you may see, from what I have advanced, how completely you have reversed my argument in the way you have put it. I did not mean to contend that the Socinian is made a member of the Church simply by paying money to it, but that the law constitutes and considers him such, and then, as such, compels him to contribute. When I referred to this subject I had in view the principle laid down by your greatest authorities, that "the commonwealth and the Church are one, the same thing in two aspects; so that whoever is a member of the first, is a member of the second." Now, it may possibly be, that your friends, contemplating the Socinian as a churchman (for which they have "legal evidence")

can accept his money without remorse, feeling that they have nothing to do with what he is in himself, but only with what he is *to them* "according to law." If so, would it then meet their conscientious objections if Parliament were to determine that the commonwealth should be one great Bible Society, the same thing in two aspects, every Englishman legally a member of both? If it would, might it not also have satisfied their consciences, to consider the Socinian contributor to the *present* Bible Society, not as what he is in himself, but as what he is to them—a "legal" member of their own Church? If, however, it should be replied that no Government could thus legislate respecting the Bible Society, because it is a *religious* institution; I inquire, *can* Government, then, thus legislate respecting the Church, which is a *spiritual* one? Or, if it should be said that Government has ceased thus to legislate respecting the Church; that the principle adverted to is only to be found among the antiquities of Hooker and Blackstone; and that, by the act of toleration, and the act for the relief of persons denying the doctrine of the Trinity, the identity of the Commonwealth and the Church is given up, and that therefore heretics now stand forth legally discriminated:—if this should be said, I much fear it will make the matter worse, as it would then seem that, to the clergy, the heretic is and can be nothing but a heretic—not even by a legal fiction anything else,—and yet, that, as such,—

a heretic legally discriminated and acknowledged, —they associate him with themselves in promoting the cause of God, by receiving his contribution to the funds of the Church.

This leads to an additional remark. You may further see, from what I have said, that your observation respecting the duty of a Christian to pay the rates and taxes imposed by any Government under which he lives, for the support of any Church, whether Heathen or Mahomedan; and your statement that, by doing so, you do not conceive he becomes a fellow-worker with the ministers of such Churches;—you must see, I think, that these remarks are quite foreign from the matter in debate. The question is not about the duty of a Christian to *pay* money exacted by infidels for the service of error; but about the propriety of certain conscientious Christians *receiving* it from infidels for the service of truth; not whether a Christian becomes, to his own mind and as his own act, a fellow-worker with Heathens, to whose institutions he compulsorily contributes; but whether these Heathens ought not to feel that he is so *to them:* it is not, therefore, whether the Socinian, so far as *he* is concerned, is the fellow-worker with the ministers of a Church which he supports by compulsion; but whether these ministers ought not to feel that, by accepting his aid, they admit his co-operation, and unite him with themselves? This is the point; and you must

dispose of it *on the professed principles* of your friends, and in consistency with their reasonings and illustrations in explanation and support of their sensitive conscientiousness.

"The principle of an establishment," (says Mr. Cunningham of Harrow) "is, that every man, whether he care for religion or not, shall be compelled to build her churches and pay her ministers." "On this principle, even the avowed enemy of religion is constrained to sacrifice his objections to the common interest, and to lend his aid to the public maintenance of the religion he despises or hates."* Only imagine, Sir, Mr. C. uttering such a sentiment in Exeter Hall, in relation to the "principle" of the Bible Society: why, Sir, your friends would have poured upon him torrents of something like abuse, or have been struck dumb with holy horror at the bare contemplation of such terrible impiety. What! God's people, in building the temple, to permit the "aid" of his "avowed enemies!" Even so. *And Mr. Cunningham says,* that in spite of all their eloquent indignation they are living in the sin, for the principle—that one thing that makes their church what it is—the rock upon which it rests,—is *just this.*

You proceed:

"Whether the government has legislated wisely "on the subject of the solemnization of marriage,

* Cunningham's Sermon on Church Establishments.

"I will not stop to inquire: I maintain, however, "that if a Socinian will unite with me in prayer, "it is not incumbent on me to refuse *to pray with* "*him:* and it does not follow that by doing so, *I* "*acknowledge him as a Christian brother.*"

Now, Sir, all this has nothing whatever to do with the subject in dispute. My argument is an "argumentum *ad hominem,*" and I am answered by general observations. The question with me is not whether the government has legislated wisely in a certain case; but whether certain men, clamorous about their consciences, act consistently in obeying it? It is not whether a Christian is to refuse to pray with a Socinian, he being willing to unite in the exercise, or whether he is acknowledged, by the mere act, to be a Christian brother; but it is, whether certain men, who, in one place, cannot pray with Socinians, *lest* they should appear to recognize them as Christians, act consistently when, in another place, they not only pray with them, but pray with them *as* Christians, and describe them and speak of them as such—and this, too, often expressly against the will of the Socinian; and always virtually so?

The case stands thus. From the Bible Society Socinians are to be excluded, because unity of faith and feeling is essential to prayer, and therefore with *them* prayer is impossible; and because their uniting in the exercise would contaminate and

defile it in the sight of God. These, with other reasons, have been amplified and illustrated by every species of figure and phraseology, all enforced, observe, by the plea, that allegiance to God demanded the required exclusion; and that conscience—conscience ready to sacrifice every thing to such a demand—animated the speakers and prompted their appeal.

Well; to such men I put this case:—supposing Government should presume so to legislate on this subject, that you would be compelled to pray with the Socinian, and pray with him as a Christian, could you, consistently with your principles, obey that law? Whatever might be the consequences, would you not feel bound to refuse and to resist? Unquestionably. But, such a law virtually exists, and *you obey it*. How is this? Where is the consistency of your doing that in one place, which, in another, you condemn?

Now, Sir, that this appeal is perfectly fair, and that by these men it ought to be felt, may be proved, I think, in very few words. They are ministers of the Church of England as well as members of the Bible Society. Their Church they regard as pre-eminently that of Christ. Of course every consideration connected with religion and conscience applies with tenfold emphasis to whatever concerns them in their former character. In that character they act as the servants of the Government; and as such, pray with professed

Socinians and Free-thinkers, and pray with them as Christians. The Socinian at times approaches the altar openly and avowedly *as such;* in one hand he holds a written protest against being compelled to "unite" in a service which he abhors; in the other, a piece of parchment, containing an address to him by the highest ecclesiastical functionary of the land, from the commencement of which I copy the following words: "William, by "Divine Providence, Archbishop of Canterbury, "Primate of all England and Metropolitan, by the "authority of Parliament lawfully empowered for "the purposes herein written*: To OUR WELL-BE-"LOVED IN CHRIST * * * * *; Grace and health. "Whereas ye are, as it is alleged, resolved to "proceed to the solemnization of true and lawful "matrimony * * * *; and that you greatly desire "that the same may be solemnized in the face of "the Church" (?) &c. &c. Then, in the course of the service, to which the Socinian is thus introduced, he is prayed for as the servant of God, and as such is solemnly "blessed" in his name. Now, Sir, I wish to know how it is, that such *very* conscientious men as Messrs. Howels, Phillips, Melville, and others, can continue for a single hour to support and sanction a system like this? Where is the *consistency* of their refusing to pray with the Socinian in one place, and their allowing him to be

* The capitals are the Archbishop's.

compelled to pray with them in another? Where, Sir, is the consistency of their denying him the name "Christian" in Exeter Hall, and receiving him, in the Church, as their "well-beloved in Christ?" How is it that they *dare*, in a solemn address to Almighty God, denominate that man his servant whom they believe to be his enemy, and whom, in *other* addresses, they describe as such—as the representative and the successor of Tobiah the Ammonite?

Remember, Sir, that your clients are not to be allowed to parry the point of these questions by interposing any general remarks founded on the principle of expediency. Other men may do this; but with such men I have no argument. Those, Sir, whom you have volunteered to defend, are not to come forward with convenient common-places about the necessity of a form of some kind for the regulation of marriages;—the propriety of this being expressed with a becoming regard to the seriousness of the ceremony;—or the statement that such things as "licences" are mere conventional instruments, necessary in a state of society like ours for the attainment of certain ends, but, in fact, not meaning, nor intended to mean, what their phraseology seems to express. It is not for your friends, Sir, to say, however it may suit yourself, that "whether the Government has legislated wisely in this matter they will not stay to inquire;" they *ought* to inquire.

Nor, Sir, can they evade the subject by pretending that such cases as I have referred to seldom occur; that, to their knowledge, they never conducted the marriage of a Socinian; or that, even if they did, they contemplated the Socinian not as such, but as a parishioner, an Englishman, a subject of the Government, only by a legal fiction as a member of the Church, not at all in a religious sense, as "a servant of God;" and not, in any sense, as "well-beloved in Christ." All this, Sir, might do for *other* men; but nothing, partaking so much of the principle of "expediency," can be tolerated in those to whom my argument is addressed. With them every thing connected with religious institutions and religious services, is a matter of *conscience;* they are not concerned therefore about the *number* of any acts by which conscience may be violated, but the principle itself which involves that violation. The Socinians actually in connexion with the Bible Society are very few. Most of the gentlemen opposed to their admission never, probably, came in contact with one; but because of the principle of recognizing them as Christians, *therefore* they conscientiously dissent from it:—*all* the Socinians in the kingdom, married by licence, are recognized by the Church as "well-beloved in Christ," and *yet* these gentlemen adhere to it! How is this? How is the system itself to be defended, which desecrates the language of religion by embodying some of its

most sacred terms in formal documents; which habitually takes the name of our Lord in vain; and which imposes on its ministers the terrible task of endorsing at the altar what they believe to be a falsehood? How are the *men* to be defended who support and sanction such a system, while, professedly, all their religious feelings are aroused against another, the evil of which is infinitely less? No men have indulged so much in indignant rebuke of the principle of expediency; none have so loudly condemned the idea of calculating consequences where duty is concerned; none have appeared to speak with such noble enthusiasm on the sublimity of sacrificing all interests to *consistency* and *conscience;* — now, Sir, I really do wish that you could make their speeches and their conduct harmonize, by shewing how it is, that the one is defensible *on the principles of the other.**

You further proceed:

"'Charity,' Sir, which 'hopeth all things,' per-
" vades the burial service of the Church. The priest
" says, 'We give thee hearty thanks, for that it
" hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother
" out of the miseries of this sinful world.' I am

* It is certainly high time that Government, to use the language of the Layman, did legislate wisely on the subject of the solemnization of marriage. The conscientious clergyman needs relief from the use of a service which, on account of its presumptions respecting the parties, it must often be painful to perform; and, as a religious rite, the Dissenter deserves liberty

" not disposed to cavil about words; but I must
" observe that 'to deliver him out of the miseries
" of this sinful world,' and *to remove him from his*
" *misery*, as you have made the priest to say, have
" not the same meaning. The words of the Church
" *pass no judgment* on the deceased. His soul has
" returned to its Maker: his Judgment is with his
" God. 'We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to
" raise us from the death of sin unto the life of
" righteousness; that, when we shall depart this
" life, we may rest in Him' (the Lord Jesus Christ,)
" 'as our *hope* is this our Brother doth.' He may
" have been a Socinian; but charity will lead us to
" *hope*, that the last cry of the departed spirit was
" to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, and if so,
" that he obtained mercy.

"You are mistaken, Sir, if you suppose that the
" deceased is by that service *acknowledged to have*
" *been a Christian.* The expressions, '*our brother*,'
" 'our *dear* brother,' contain no such acknowledg-
" ment. They are expressions dictated by charity,
" by that love, which is the fruit of the Spirit, and
" which shall endure throughout eternity."

in relation to it, as much as in relation to any thing else connected with the conscience. It is my intention to promote a petition to the next Parliament on this subject. Every dissenting minister will probably do the same. It would be well, perhaps, to continue the application every year till relief be obtained. Joshua Wilson, Esq. has fully discussed the marriage question in his admirable "Appeal" upon the subject.

In proceeding to make a remark or two upon this passage, I am sorry to be under the necessity of again reminding you of the nature of my argument. In the "Letter," I did not pretend to discuss the general merits of the burial service, or to enter into the precise meaning which ought to be put upon particular expressions: I was reasoning with men on their own principles—men, who conscientiously refused either to employ words or to perform actions which involved, or might appear to involve, more than they felt. They would not *call* the Socinian a Christian, because they did not believe him to be one. As to calling him "brother," or "dear brother,"—I put it to their honour as gentlemen to say, whether such phrases are not more exceptionable than "Christian" itself? Not only would they not use terms which might mislead, but they objected to an occasional appearance in public with Socinians, because by that, they would seem to countenance their claim to Christianity, and might encourage in them and in others the dangerous delusion. My argument, Sir, was with *such* persons; and I have yet to learn, how, *upon their principles,* they can read the burial service over a Socinian, or continue in a Church which practically requires it, and still dare to lift their heads in society, and to look honest men in the face.

I will contend, Sir, for charity as strenuously as yourself; but charity has its limits. St. Paul did not think that he violated the principle when he

said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." You know, or ought to know, that it is not *literally* true that charity can hope "all things;" there are many things which it cannot hope,—things which, were it to pretend to hope, would prove that it had degenerated from a virtue to a weakness.

Instead of saying that the priest—(for neither will *I* cavil about words; and therefore I adopt the term you employ,—a term, however, which I cannot but regard as highly objectionable)—instead of saying that the priest gave God thanks over the dead "for removing him from his misery," it would have been better, I admit, if I had used the precise language of the service. It may be some apology, however, that, when I introduced the phrase, I was relating a conversation which I *know* took place, and I gave, from memory, both the substance of the conversation, and the *sense,* as I conceived, of the expressions of thankfulness. It did not, I confess, occur to me, that the words left room for the supposition, that the "dear brother," delivered from the miseries of *this* sinful world," had passed into those of another one; and that "*hearty* thanks" were offered for what might be believed, by a mental reservation, to be his transfer from the less state of suffering to the greater. I am willing to concede to you, that, even on this (*your* hypothesis) the thanks are not

given to God for transferring him into the greater misery, but only for removing him from the less;—but, Sir, I contend that these thanks are not only absurd but impious, unless they are really connected with a *rational* and *scriptural* hope, that the individual (according to the words which immediately precede them in the prayer) has died "in the Lord," is "delivered from the burden of the flesh," and "is in joy and felicity." The hope which *you*, Sir, express, respecting "the last cry of the departed spirit;" a cry which none could hear, and of which therefore there could be no evidence;—a cry, which, in many cases, would have to be uttered after a verbal confession of an opposite nature:—a cry, the probability of which the whole life of the individual would contradict, and the very thought of which all his connexions would condemn;—a hope, Sir, which thus rejects every thing you *do* know, to establish itself upon something which you do *not*, I cannot but regard as consistent neither with Scripture nor with reason. That cause, Sir, which needs a defence like this, is desperate indeed!

Your assertion that the terms "*our brother*," and "our *dear* brother," contain no such acknowledgment as that of the deceased having been a Christian, I really cannot comprehend, unless you mean it as a quibble, of which I should be sorry to suspect you. Admit that the Christianity of the deceased is not "acknowledged," and what then? Is it not

involved, understood, and *intended to be so?* The terms can mean nothing in a religious service but religious relationship; they are an acknowledgment, not that the departed was a *man*—a brother, by having been made of the "same blood" with those that bury him,—you *know* they do not mean this. The terms are employed in a moral and religious sense, and are to be interpreted in consistency with Christian ideas. In fact, it is no use denying that the whole service is constructed on the supposition of the safety of the departed; the expressions, therefore, in ten thousand cases, used as they are *without* evidence or *against* it, in opposition to all proof and in violation of all propriety, must, at such times, be the dictate of "that charity"—of "that love," "which is" *not* "the fruit of the Spirit," "and which will" *not* "endure throughout eternity."

You seem to me, Sir, to condemn by your opinion the judgment of many of the most judicious, pious, and talented of your own Church. Many of the Clergy are known most deeply to lament the necessity that is laid upon them of continually using this service. *As* Clergymen, it will not offend you to say, that they have probably given much more serious consideration to the subject than yourself. That feeling which gives rise to their doubts and fears, is to me, I must confess, as worthy of respect, as that want of feeling which makes you insensible to either. There are some

of them, it is understood, who prefer a proprietary chapel to a parochial charge, because they are thus free from being so often compelled to do that which they internally condemn. Others I mentioned in my former Letter — and mentioned on "legal" evidence—who stoop to the most humiliating expedient to avoid burying a Socinian. Mr. Noel, you will see, positively affirms that he "would not bury a Socinian, according to the form in the Prayer-book, which is meant for those exclusively whom we may hope to have died in the faith;"—he does not mean *your* hope, observe, for then he might bury *any* person according to *any* form. Even the editors of the *British Critic* desert you: the following is their remark, which, coming from such a quarter, you will confess, I think, is worthy your careful consideration. "The unqualified thanksgiving for the death of a deceased person, and the unqualified hope and belief respecting his condition, are passages in the burial service, *which may be explained away much more easily than they can be defended.*"—No. XXI. Jan. 1832, p. 219.

In concluding your Letter, you tell me what you are, saying,

"I am, Sir,
"a Lay Member of that Church
"which prays for her Enemies."

Now, if you mean by this *the Church of Christ*, as that includes every part and portion of the true

Church, the description does not belong to you more than to any other Christian whatever. If you mean *the Church of England*, and, if you mean to imply that it is the distinction and peculiarity of *that* Church "to pray for her enemies," that she is thus to be described *in opposition to all others;* then, I beg to inform you, that you are either deeply prejudiced or deplorably ignorant; you either *will* not understand the character of other Churches, or you are utterly and shamefully unacquainted with that character. But, in the last place, if by this description of yourself, you mean to insinuate that *I* am an enemy to the Church of England in any sense implying malignity or bitterness; I have only to say that you are just as ignorant of my character, as, on the previous supposition, you are of that of Churches which differ from your own. Had you *said*, what I suppose you may have meant to insinuate, it would have been a false "accusation;" and I think I may refer to the tone and temper of my Letter to Mr. Noel in proof of this assertion. As it is, however, you have prevented the pain it would have cost me, correctly to characterize and to condemn such injustice. I am not sure—I have not "*legal*" evidence, that you intended your words to convey what I have hinted, and therefore I shall say nothing further about them at present.

I have thus, Sir, replied to every line of your Letter; whether satisfactorily or not, impartial men

must determine. Neither your opinion nor mine is much to be regarded, as we cannot be very equitable judges in our own cause. My impressions, however (whether right or wrong), respecting the fairness and force of my argument, and the mistake and feebleness of your attempt to overthrow it, are so decided, that I shall conclude my remarks with just two words, prompted by these impressions, one in relation to your friends, and the other to yourself.

In relation, then, to the gentlemen whom you have undertaken to defend, I must confess, Sir, that the more I contrast their professions with their conduct, the more am I constrained to pity some of them as weak, to suspect others to be insincere, and to condemn all as inconsistent. Had I been a Clergyman, and had I come forward, publicly claiming for myself more than ordinary conscientiousness, and scouting and scorning the principle of expediency, after the manner of many of your friends, I do not see how I could have continued an hour longer in connexion with a Church, whose very being is to be accounted for only on the principle repudiated, and whose practice involves the very things which my conscience would have led me to condemn. Had I, however, continued the connexion, I should have felt, I think, that I was doing what was expedient rather than what was right; I should have been stung with a lurking suspicion that I had forfeited the

respect of honourable men, and had drawn down upon myself the frown of my Maker; — in short, with all the torments of "a conscience" *not* "void of offence" either towards man or towards God. How your friends, Sir, contrive to escape these reflections, I cannot tell—nor will I conjecture. That they *do* escape them I believe; for I will admit, that of the piety and character of most of them I have a high estimation, and am persuaded that, to their own minds, they stand acquitted of any inconsistency. But I should be glad to learn *how* they come to this conclusion; by what *reasoning* it is that they arrive at it. Can they prove that the same thing, or worse, which is sin in a member of the Bible Society, is *not* sin in the minister of a Church? Or can they prove that, as ministers of the Church of England, they are not required to sanction such things? Let them. Let them shew that my remarks have no force, that my analogies do not apply, and that they can easily escape the argument they involve. Let them defend their conduct; defend it, observe, *on their own professed principles*—not by reasonings founded on expediency, or by any kind of argument which they have publicly given up—but by what high conscientiousness and holy Scripture will alone sanction, and as they must one day answer at the bar of God, for the character of every *system* to which they afford their voluntary support. They take the Socinian's money, and promote with it the

interests of their Church; they receive the Socinian at the altar, and pray with him as a brother "beloved in Christ;" they bury him, at last, as one whom they hope to have died in the Lord:—they do all this, because the Government has determined that that which is in one respect a nation, shall in another respect be a Church;* that every individual shall be regarded as a member of it, and that, therefore, he shall be taxed, and treated, and talked of as such. If this can satisfy their consciences, that they do not any of the things mentioned above with Socinians, but only with members of the Church, be it so. Some persons, however, will wonder what right, and what *power*, a Government has to vote all Socinians to be Christians and Churchmen; and others will wonder how *really* conscientious men can countenance this; can consent practically to support and to defend it; or (innocent souls!) can act as if they were not aware of the iniquitous imposition.

* "We find temporal governors, as, for instance, David, Asa, Jehosaphat, and Josiah, frequently spoken of with approbation for their *acts of legislation* in favour of religion. *Our state*, therefore, as Hooker remarks, is, in this respect, 'according to the pattern of God's own ancient elect people: which was *not*, *part* of them the commonwealth, and *part* of them the Church of God; but *the self-same people, whole and entire, were* BOTH, under one chief governor, on whose supreme authority they did all depend.'"—See Mr. Wilks's tract, entitled "A Church Establishment Lawful, Scriptural, and Necessary," published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

With respect to yourself, my good Sir, I think it right to say, in all brotherly faithfulness, that I fear I shall be condemned by many as having bestowed upon you and your Letter far more attention than either deserve;—for this, however, I have reasons arising from something different from both. It appears to me that you have neither treated my argument with fairness, nor conducted your own with ability. You affect to speak with the tone of an oracle, but your reasoning would be a discredit to meaner pretensions. In speaking of your "reasoning," indeed, I am wrong,—you are above that; in consistency with the character you assume, you deal mostly in simple assertions; you appeal to faith more than to reason, and seem to expect to be believed rather than examined. I candidly confess to you, that I fear you have betrayed both arrogance and imbecility—the one, in supposing that you had the power to condense much argument in your little observations; and the other, by the palpable weakness of your observations themselves. I am not sure either, as I have already hinted, that your *spirit* and temper are quite Christian: something very like a sting,—intended, I fear, to be one,—seems to lurk in the tail of your written representative. There is "venom," I suspect, on the shaft; happily, however, for your "enemies," there is neither skill in the hand nor "vigour in the bow." I may be wrong in my conjecture; fearing, however, that I am not, I

think it my duty to hint at your exposure to reproof. If ever you write again, my worst wish for you is, that you may have discretion to choose a better cause, piety to serve it in a better spirit, and modesty enough to make at least an effort to defend it.

I am, &c.

FIAT JUSTITIA.

LETTER II.

TO THE DISSENTER.

"*To* 'Fiat Justitia.'"

[It seems proper to insert, as introductory to the next Letter, the communication of the "Dissenter," to which it is a reply. That communication was as follows. It is dated "Ryde," merely from the circumstance that the writer was, at the time, spending a few weeks in the Isle of Wight.]

"*Ryde, Oct.* 8, 1831.

"My Dear Sir,

"Will you excuse me for suggesting, most respectfully, a remark or two which has occurred to me in just reading the pamphlet of *Fiat Justitia*, which I hope and trust will, under the Divine blessing, be made very useful; but there are a few expressions in it, which appeared to me rather calculated to lessen its usefulness. It seems to me that what is said at the bottom of p. 36, implies an approbation of Episcopacy, and of the Church forms and discipline. Is it not as much as to say, 'If you do what I propose, you will do all that you can be expected to do, and all that you ought to do?'—which, I imagine, is very far from your

feeling, and I cannot help thinking that you would believe that a humble, diligent, prayerful attention to the subject would lead the Clergy to something very different from the forms and discipline of the Church of England. But what follows, appears to me much more open to objection; it is said, 'I believe that you would produce an effect,' &c. Now, in the first place, I should with great deference, differ from that expectation; for I fear that if the Evangelical Clergy were to form themselves into a body of that sort, with the Church forms and discipline, they would be but half untramelled. But even admitting the truth of the expectation, may I suggest, very humbly, whether that is quite the right way to speak of any human agency (I refer also to the subsequent expression respecting accelerating the Millennium a hundred years); and is it not much calculated to puff up the body of the Clergy to whom it is applied, who, like all the rest of us, do not much need such cordials? Now, my dear Sir, will you forgive my freedom, which nothing but my confidence in your kindness could have induced me to take, and believe me,

"Your's, very respectfully,

"A DISSENTER."

LETTER II.

IN REPLY TO THE "DISSENTER."

MY DEAR SIR,

I REGRET that you should think it necessary to adopt so apologetical a style in addressing me on what you deem the defects of the publication to which you refer. I hope I shall ever be ready to receive any friendly animadversions on whatever I may write, in the spirit with which one Christian should listen to another. In the present instance, it is impossible not to feel that he who puts his objections in so conciliatory a shape, is entitled to a serious and respectful reply.

I cannot say that your letter has surprised me. The most of your objections (and more than you have named) I fully anticipated to arise in some minds, in consequence of the phraseology which, in the Letter to Mr. Noel, I selected and employed. I *meant*, in a few passages, to convey more than at first met the ear, leaving it to be discovered by those whom it might concern. For certain

expressions you have put me on my defence,—and I will endeavour to defend them. I can only do so by shewing that they are consistent with my opinions, whether these opinions be right or wrong. I have no doubt that what I am about to advance, would be considered by some as a deliberate aggravation of my first error.

Like yourself, I am a Dissenter. With my views I could not belong to the Establishment without sin. Without giving an opinion on the general question, whether a Christian government might not, as such, do something for the promotion of religion, I remark, that the kind and degree of connexion with the state, which distinguishes the English Establishment, appears to me unscriptural, and such as has a necessary tendency to debase the character of the Church, and to frustrate the purposes for which it exists. If this connexion be not that spiritual "adultery with the kings of the earth," which constitutes one of the features and one of the offences of Antichrist, it is something very nearly approaching it. — I could not conscientiously, and as an honest man, subscribe to the second article of the Thirty-sixth Canon (to say nothing of the other two), which declares "that the Book of Common-Prayer, and of ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the word of God." I could not sign this, because I do not believe it. The terms of subscription are very particular, for

the express purpose, it is stated, of "avoiding all ambiguities." Were I to make the demanded declaration, it would *in my case* be a lie — a lie solemnly subscribed at the very threshold of God's Church. I dare not do this, as I value my salvation, and desire to preserve my peace of mind, and to retain my self-respect.—The sectarian and schismatical character of the Establishment, evinced by its high pretensions and exclusive communion, is to me also an insuperable objection against it. Were I to enter it, I must do so at the expense of all visible fellowship with every other Church; I must practically profess to unminister all those faithful and holy men with whom I have delighted to associate, and whom God has conspicuously honoured and blessed;—to say nothing of acknowledging as his ministers, hundreds of others who are utterly ignorant of the Gospel, or who habitually pervert it, and whose influence on the piety of the people is like a blight and a curse.

Whether these objections are well-founded or not, this is not the place to inquire or to prove. You, I know, will admit them to be weighty; to me they appear to be invincible. They take in my mind the form of principles; they compel me to dissent as a matter of common honesty, without any pretensions to very elevated conscientiousness. It is very evident, that so long as I retain these opinions, I could never be a Churchman,—or never consistently. No man, who thinks

and feels in the same way, has any honourable alternative *but* to dissent. Such dissent no Churchman whatever can condemn; he must rather feel that *conformity* under such circumstances would deserve condemnation. He might think the opinions themselves mistaken and groundless; but, as to its being wrong to act upon them,—he cannot believe it. The most devoted Conformist, in proportion as he loves his Church, must pray for it to be delivered from those who could give it nothing but a false and hypocritical support.

Relinquishing the Establishment on what I consider to be the call of duty and of truth, and yet believing it to be a matter of positive obligation visibly to belong to the Church of Christ, I look round for some other branch or portion of that Church existing in such a state as to constitution and character, and proposing such terms to its members and ministers, as may render union with it at once desirable and possible. I think I could find this in more than one of the minor sects of this country; I do certainly find it, in my estimation, in that with which I am associated. As a minister of this body, I have been required to do nothing that violated my conscience; I do nothing habitually, as such, which appears to me to involve any thing like dissimulation or falsehood, or which sanctions a system believed either to be in principle opposed to the will of Christ, or so corrupt in administration as to be pregnant with mischief.

I have thus gained one thing—the testimony of my conscience; but this does not imply that I have gained all things. I may be free from the greatest possible evil that can happen to man, the pain of the moral sense arising from the consciousness or the suspicion of sin; but I may not be free from many other evils—evils of lesser weight and of limited magnitude, which may not interfere with positive principle, but the pressure of which may be painfully felt. I may rejoice in being delivered from doing that which I should deem to be wrong; but I may feel perhaps that I am not doing *all* that I may deem to be right.

From this you will perceive that possibly I may not regard myself as bound to recommend to a Churchman *every* thing I find in dissent. I may think it his duty to leave the Establishment, as I think it mine to continue out of it; but I may not think it his duty to leave all that he finds there, if, by the mode of his removal he can carry part of it with him: or, I may permit him a little pardonable partiality for what I may think minor abuses, trusting that he will not be long in outgrowing the affection. A man may wish others to agree with him in principles, because he feels satisfied of their truth; but he may care little about details, because he may suspect that some of them are doubtful: or, he may be anxious to induce those whom he deems to be in error, to abandon at once the most important and criminal; believing, that if they do

this, time will lead them to discover and to correct the others for themselves.

These remarks have perhaps betrayed the secret of that extreme moderation which I evinced in speaking of the Evangelical Clergy as dissenters from the Church. I think they *ought* to dissent; because, sincerely believing that the connexion subsisting between their Church and the state is unscriptural and ruinous, I think they might see this if they would, and that they ought to act upon the conviction, whatever be the consequences; because, according to my conception of some of their own principles and sentiments, I do not see how they can sign the terms of subscription, or continue to support and sanction a Church which imposes them, without such equivocation and sophistry, as they would be the first to condemn in an affair of common life; and because, the arguments of those who "conscientiously" condemn the constitution and practice of the Bible Society, (to whom I more particularly referred in the Letter to Mr. Noel,) involve, in my opinion, principles which apply, "*à fortiori*," to the constitution and practice of the Established Church.

But, supposing that they should thus act, and should give a practical demonstration of the existence and power of consistency and conscience—things, the *names* of which we have lately heard so incessantly repeated; suppose they should do this, and separate from the Establishment; must it

be urged upon them, that the principle which leads them thus far, ought, at once and immediately, to lead them much farther? Must they be told that they have done nothing until they have formed little independent societies, and have adopted all the peculiarities of worship and government which distinguish Baptist and Congregational Churches? If Dissenters think so—I am not the advocate to answer their purpose. I do not take this view of the subject. In my opinion, much advantage would ensue to the cause of God, if the Evangelical Clergy were to become just what I described and *nothing more*;—if, separated from the state, they and their congregations constituted an Independent Episcopal Church;—if, impelled by principle thus far, other reforms were left to experience, to expediency, and to time.

My reasons for this opinion are such as these. I do not regard any system of Church-government, at present existing, as of divine right. I much doubt whether there is any entire model, pattern, or platform in the New Testament, intended to be universally binding. I am inclined to think that there are important general principles involved or recognized, which, in their essence, are to be regarded in our conduct; but which, in their mode of operation, admit of being adapted to circumstances under a wise and holy expediency. The ends to be accomplished by the Church are always the same; the best way in which they may be

secured may differ in its different conditions. I question whether Congregationalists themselves, though impregnable in my opinion on the point of dissent from the Establishment, are either defensible or consistent in many of the parts and practices of their own system. I am prepared, therefore, to see, without regret, a Church of another order existing around us; like us separated from the Establishment, but retaining the constitution and the forms of an Episcopal community. Episcopacy, you must remember, would not only be a very harmless thing when separated from the state, but, in such a condition, it would soon cease to be the splendid error which it at present is, and, by the modifications it would receive, might perhaps come nearer to the primitive model (if there be one) than Congregationalism itself. Separated from the state, many immense evils of the Episcopal system, as at present existing, would be annihilated at once. The men, too, of whom the supposed Church would be composed, would have the power to resist the imposition of the Prayer-book *as it is*,—and they *would* resist it; we should soon see that their voice, as well as their conscience, would demand a revision;—their power and liberty would secure it;—alterations would be made in their forms and ritual, which would render their Liturgy and Offices more scriptural in themselves, and less objectionable to honest men, than they unquestionably are at present. Relieved

from the thraldom of a State-church, they would get rid of the "sectarian spirit," which that thraldom inspires and perpetuates;—they would learn, as a body, to recognize the validity of other Churches and other ministers, and would hold visible communion with them as such. This would be beneficial to both parties;—it would destroy in time the bigotry of both;—each would gradually come nearer the other, and get proportionably farther from itself; and in the end, they would meet just at the point, perhaps, where truth is at present—*somewhere* in the space between them.

From this explanation, you will perceive, that my language was not intended to imply an approbation of Episcopacy as it is, nor of the Church forms and discipline as they are; I meant only to express the satisfaction I should feel in the first step towards reformation being taken by the parties concerned, and my willingness to leave the next to themselves. I certainly did not mean to contend, that no modification of Episcopacy could render it innocent, and no alteration in the forms of the Church make them acceptable. I am not sure that the first might not be reduced to something nearly primitive, and as to the second, I am inclined to prefer the use of a Liturgy in public worship, *in connexion with free prayer*, to either the one or the other exclusively and alone. Dissenting Churches need, I think, reform as well as the Church established by law;—not to the same

extent, indeed, nor of the same kind, but still reform. Feeling this, I am not disposed, in inviting others to become Dissenters, to ask them to go all at once so far, as that the next step, if they are wise, will be to attempt to come back again,—unless, indeed, I could hope that, by doing so, they would bring in a body—at least a *little* way—their elder nonconforming brethren along with them.

The fact is, I sometimes suspect that *no system*, as at present existing and administered, is exactly suited to the condition of the country. The Church is encumbered with frightful enormities; the people have outstripped it in the stature of their minds, and they have outlived that affection which, from unreasoning sentiment—from mere instinctive respect for what is established and venerable,—once attached them to its observances and its forms. Dissent, unaccommodating and exclusive, ignorant or regardless of human nature, pursuing its principles of theoretical perfection, and attaching too much importance to microscopic formalities,—repels many whom it should study to attract. Thousands who are ill at ease while remaining in the Church, are by no means disposed to fall back on the conventicle. The Clergyman dissatisfied with the constitution and the state of the Establishment, anxious and ready to leave it, looks abroad in vain for some other denomination with which he could willingly associate. Those who positively secede do not unite themselves with

existing Dissenters. If any number were to separate, they would be *compelled* to form a distinct denomination, for there is none at present with which they could cordially coalesce. The sudden destruction of the Church by violence and rapine, is, I am quite persuaded, what every liberal Dissenter would deplore. Touched, however, it must be, and that with no tender hand. The distribution of its property; the revision of its offices; its detachment from the state; and its advances to communion with other churches;—all this must proceed, and proceed far, to meet the just and imperative demands prompted either by the desire for rational reform, or by the principles and aspirations of advancing piety. All this, I imagine, would be both hastened and regulated by the *dissent* of any considerable portion of the Evangelical Clergy. The Church is not now in a condition to lose two thousand of her sons,—to withstand the shock, and to continue her existence as she is. The defection of half the number would ruin—would restore her. Such an event would command attention. By its influence on one side, it would compel reform to do its work thoroughly, and to do it at once; by its influence on the other, it would soften the demands of many who might be strongly disposed to extirpation and to violence—to the devotement to secular purposes, of what it would be better to preserve under an improved religious appropriation.

With respect to the other expressions which you

quote, and the propriety of which you question, I am not disposed to push their defence too far. The language, perhaps, may be a little too strong. Weighed and measured phraseology, you know, must not be too severely demanded in a hasty and popular composition. I may remind you, too, that the expectation from which you differ, was mentioned by me expressly as a matter of opinion—a thing that admitted of dispute, and would probably be disputed; but which, whatever might be thought of it, left the force of my argument, and the point of my appeal, untouched.

As a matter of opinion, I am still inclined to retain it. All things considered, it appears, I think, reasonable. The Evangelical Clergy are now a considerable body; they include in their number some connected with the higher classes; several of them are distinguished by superior talents; and all have enjoyed, and many have improved, the immense advantages of thorough education. As a body, whatever may be thought of their theological attainments, systematically considered, they are unquestionably distinguished, in general, by fervent and unaffected piety, great simplicity of motive, and eminent purity of life. From their situation, as connected with the Establishment, they possess a sort of *accidental* superiority over the ministers of other sects; their movements would therefore be more observed, whether intrinsically more deserving of observation or not. They might produce, from

this circumstance, an effect upon the nation, and especially upon the higher classes, which the movements and the ministers of no other denomination could produce. Suppose, then, that these men in a body, or in very large numbers, should give a practical proof of their devotion to God by separating from the Establishment—condemning the evils by which their Church is at present defiled, and lifting up their voice against the "alliance" that occasions them;—supposing them to keep together, still in love with some of their institutions, and to present a picture of Episcopacy without its pomp, and of the discipline of their Church without its corruptions; I cannot but consider that the attention of thousands would be drawn to the subject of religion, who are now invulnerable to every attack; who are shielded by the panoply of their rank, their education, and their habits; their pharisaical pride, or their infidel indifference. The novelty of the spectacle would excite attention; attention would lead to inquiry; and inquiry would terminate in attachment. Many who are now the persecutors of the "evangelicals," would be roused by the supposed movement to examine that which they condemn without understanding; and contempt and ridicule would give place to feelings and sentiments of an opposite description. The nation at large would be led to the *religious* aspect of the question as connected with the Establishment, rather than the *pecuniary*, which at

present is far too exclusively entertained. The men themselves would be carried farther than they might at first contemplate, and others would be excited by their example both to reformation and to zeal. They would produce an effect, I think, on the Government and on the country, which would incalculably accelerate the coming of those religious reforms, *in* the Establishment and *out* of it, which *must* come before any prospect can be entertained of the speedy subjugation of the world, or the permanent triumph and purity of the Church.

As to your question, whether my language "is quite the right way to speak of any human agency," I can only reply, that I did not mean it to be taken in an absolute sense, irrespective of the blessing of that Being without whose aid nothing is wise, and nothing strong. It is usual to speak of an instrument as producing an effect, although we know that the real efficiency is in the agent employing it. St. James, you remember, in the last two verses of his epistle, speaks of one man converting another without the least allusion to the operations of the Spirit. "Is this quite the right way to speak of any human agency?" Yes: taking the language as it is meant, and in connexion with the known sentiments of the writer. I ask nothing, my dear Sir, in justification of my expressions, but the candid application to them of this canon of criticism. As to "puffing up the body of the

Clergy, to whom the expressions are applied," I need not say that I had no such intention; I must add, however, that the expressions themselves appear to me to have an opposite tendency. They are employed, not in relation to what the men are, or to what they are doing, but to what they *ought* to be, and to what, as such, they might effect. Their sin in sitting still, therefore, becomes conspicuous, in proportion to the view we take of the opportunity they lose, and the successes they forfeit.

In conclusion, permit me to remark, that I think the prominent and the pious of all parties have need of much caution and charity in times like the present, when events are inevitable, the precise character of which is difficult to be detected, and the consequences of which it is impossible to foresee. The Churchman has need to be on his guard lest, from a criminal apprehension of future encroachments, he should justify or palliate what he knows to be wrong; lest, stung and exasperated by the present state of public opinion, he is tempted to find a malignant satisfaction in exaggerating the evils of minor communities. The Dissenter should be jealous lest, in contemplating the fate of the Church, his pleasure, instead of being holy joy at the triumph of truth, should be the chuckle of selfishness at the humiliation of a rival. All have reason to watch and pray, lest their zeal should be a desire for the prevalence of

their own peculiarities—not because they are right, but because they are theirs; and lest they should insist upon this, rather than be willing to admit an accommodation to circumstances, or any new and comprehensive arrangement better suited to the state of the world. The greatest happiness of the greatest number, is a wise exposition of the final cause of political institutions. The greatest virtue of the greatest number (meaning their conversion, holiness, and salvation), is perhaps equally so of what are ecclesiastical. That form of the Church is best, and comes nearest to the *spirit* of the primitive model, that secures this. That the Church of England, or such an establishment as the English, is that form, is a proposition which I feel that I can reject with perfect conviction. That Independency is so—I dare not assert. The first seems adapted merely to prevent the absolute infidelity of the many; the second, to preserve and perfect the piety of a few. I have, at times, thought—I may be mistaken—but I *have* thought, that I could imagine something partaking of both, but better than either.

The adherents of each of the Christian sects interpret the Millennium to mean, the universal prevalence of all the opinions and habits of their own. I once heard a person say, "that, at that sublime era, all the world would be Baptists, and be formed into little Baptist societies; and that *this* would be its sublimity!" He was, perhaps,

hardly serious: yet, what is the language of the exclusive pretensions and the party zeal of every sectarian (whether Churchman or Dissenter) but just this? He virtually says, 'Unless our views on points of secondary importance be received as the true, and our Church order and discipline adopted as the primitive,—the mass of mankind never can be saved, nor the light of the Millennium be expected to dawn.' I cherish, my dear friend, a strong persuasion—one whose influence on my own mind I feel to be delightful, expansive, and purifying—that the Millennium will be introduced in another manner, and be preceded by indications of a different spirit. No exultation will be inspired by the mode of its approach, to the fierce partisans of any form of ecclesiastical polity. Either some new form, comprehending the different elements of excellence at present separated and diffused, will suddenly arise, produced by such a donation to the Church of charity and wisdom as shall lead, almost by miracle, to universal combination and consolidated effort, and in *this* all others shall merge and terminate;—or many of those at present existing may remain, but the spirit that distinguishes and divides them shall perish. There may be to the last, perhaps, Ephraim and Judah; but "Judah shall not vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah." The rise and diffusion of a feeling like this, would be to me a proof that "God was coming forth from his place," "to visit

his Church and to water it; greatly to enrich it with the river of God which is full of water;" "to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, and a rejoicing to all people." I could imagine that the latter-day glory were begun, if I heard, on all sides and from many voices, a demand for UNION—not *uniformity:* for UNIVERSAL COMMUNION—not *sectarian exclusiveness.* This is the spirit which, in its perfect development, will raise every sect above its petty partialities, and at last fuse all into one great and consolidated whole. Deep, pure, unaffected love penetrating and pervading the Church, uniting all its parts in actual fellowship, and making it visibly as well as spiritually one; this is the weapon for subduing the world. The virtue of love has been much lauded, but little felt; often inculcated, but seldom exemplified; talked of, but not understood. Men, judging from their conduct, have supposed it to signify love *to their own sect*—marvellous affection!—or love to all others *when they shall have joined theirs,*—magnanimous liberality! Love of this sort has *had* its Millennium. It has done nothing but mischief during the long lapse of far more than a thousand years. Another, and a more comprehensive principle, is required now. I cannot but hope that the day is approaching when the sublime experiment of its power shall be tried. The bigot of every denomination has taken for his text, "The wisdom that is from above is *first* pure, *then* peaceable;" and on this he has

rung his eternal changes, arguing for the subjugation of all to sympathy with himself, before he could unite with them in the communion of the Church. I should say to all who agree in the profession of primary and fundamental truth, but who differ in secondary and inconsiderable matters, "Study *first* to be peaceable, *then* pure;" "Receive ye one another, as Christ also received you, to the glory of God;" "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth;" "Follow after the things that make for peace, and things whereby ye may edify each other." In your separate condition you have all arrived at the same views as to saving truth: expect further agreement as the reward of fellowship. "Let as many as are perfect"—instructed in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine—"be thus minded;" and, "if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,"—if, on subordinate topics, you have different opinions—by proceeding together in brotherly communion, "God will reveal even this unto you." Love in the heart will become light in the intellect; you will feel yourselves perpetually approaching to greater uniformity; in proportion as you have more of that visible oneness which will for ever be seen in the Church in heaven, you will display less of that diversity of sentiment which hitherto has distinguished and often distracted the Church upon earth.

I must now close. I by no means expect your instant or entire acquiescence in every thing I have advanced. I have given you a few slight sketches of some of those forms of thought which occasionally flit before me when reflecting on the religious condition and prospects of mankind; and, such as they are, I submit them to your candid and serious consideration,

I am, my dear Sir,

Very respectfully your's,

FIAT JUSTITIA.

APPENDIX.

"I am satisfied I have done but little by these observations considered in themselves; and I never should have taken the pains to digest them, much less should I have ever ventured to publish them, if I was not convinced, that .... a man who works beneath the surface of things, though he may be wrong himself, yet may clear the way for others, and may chance to make even his errors subservient to the cause of truth.—I only desire one favour, that no part of (these observations) be judged of by itself, and independently of the rest: for I am sensible, that I have not disposed my materials to abide the test of a captious controversy, but of sober and even forgiving examination; that they are not armed at all points for battle, but dressed to visit those who are willing to give a peaceful entrance to truth."—BURKE.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

POSTSCRIPT TO LETTER I.

PAGE 34, LINE 7.

"*Mr. Noel, you will see, positively affirms that he would not bury a Socinian according to the form in the Prayer-book, &c.*"] The authority on which I give this determination of Mr. Noel, is the following letter from himself, addressed to me in acknowledgment of his receipt of my former pamphlet. I had his permission, some time ago, to print the document, with such remarks as I might think proper to append to it, in a work which I was expecting to publish; but I did not avail myself of that permission. I insert the letter here, to shew the "Layman" that I was authorized to advance what I did in relation to the writer. I may take, perhaps, this opportunity to add a remark or two upon it.

"*To* 'FIAT JUSTITIA.'

"MY DEAR SIR,—I beg to thank you for the kind "tone of your letter, in which you have said nothing to "give me offence. To me it appears, at present, that I "do not, in the slightest degree, join in the Church with "Socinians, or any deniers of fundamental doctrines, "whom, although Clergymen, I neither publicly nor

" privately own to be ministers of Christ, and hold no " communion with them as brethren, which I do with " pious men of every name. I should not bury a Soci- " nian, dying such, nor ask any other minister to do it for " me, according to the form in the Prayer-book, which is " meant for those exclusively whom we may hope to have " died in the faith. By God's grace, I intend to follow " my principle, as laid down by you correctly, through the " whole of my conduct; I promise you a serious attention " to your arguments, which at present seem to me to be " built on a false hypothesis, and shall be truly thankful for " your prayers. What makes me the rather question, at " first glance, the soundness of your position, is, that I do " not recollect ever to have met this among the many " grounds of nonconformity upon which your illustrious " forerunners, in the days of Baxter, Howe, and Owen, " were driven from the Establishment by the sectarian " spirit which then presided over its councils. I regret " not to be able to admit some Dissenters to my pulpit; " but neither would I admit some in the Church, with " whom I hold brotherly communion, as real ministers " of Christ, because they so prominently advance certain " peculiarities which I think mischievous, — yet I hold " entire communion with them; why can I not with " Dissenters, though remaining in the Establishment? I " will gladly see them joining with my flock at the table " of the Lord, and, in cases where I could not join with " those in my own communion, I would gladly join with " them, most fully recognizing the validity of their orders, " whether Presbyterian or Independent. Excuse haste: " I have only read your letter cursorily; and it deserves " a more attentive consideration.

" I remain, Sir, truly yours,

" W. B. Noel."

" *Walthamstow, June 6.*"

This is the letter of a Christian and a gentleman. Here are no low insinuations that Fiat Justitia is an " enemy " to the Church, needing its benevolent intercession; the writer addresses him as a Christian brother, for whose prayers he should himself be thankful. As to the letter itself, I am not disposed minutely to discuss its positions. It might be made the basis of much argument; but it is not my intention to indulge in this. I shall notice, however, some sentiments which it suggests, bearing on the subject of this publication, and important in the present state of public opinion.

It appears to me, then, that, on the supposition of there being among the ministers of the Establishment " deniers of fundamental doctrines," an evangelical minister must " privately " consider them as not being " ministers of Christ," " although Clergymen;" so long, however, as they are all ministers of the same Church, it never can be said that he " holds no communion with them as brethren," and " does not publicly own them to be ministers of Christ." He publicly acknowledges them as both, " although " he privately believes them to be neither. By so doing, according to the reasoning of the " Layman's" friends, he sanctions a tremendous delusion; countenances the belief that they are what they are not; and wishes them " God-speed" in giving the instruction " which causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

Now, in the Bible Society, there are, according to Mr. Dudley's calculation, three Unitarian officers out of 10,000, and thirty-two Unitarian committee-men out of 37,500. Of these thirty-five persons, perhaps eight or ten may be ministers. The conscientious dread of appearing to aid the delusion of these persons being ministers of Christ, by uniting with them in a way which does not imply spiritual relationship, leads to a vast expenditure of feeling, time, eloquence, and money, and at last to a dissent from the Society altogether.

In the Church of England, according to the conscien-

tious belief of the evangelical party, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of the Clergy who are anti-evangelical; that is, "who *do not preach the Gospel;*" this is their own language: it means that these men, "although Clergymen," do that, which, if "an angel from heaven" were to do, St. Paul would visit him with his indignant anathema. The persons referred to above, who dissent from the Bible Society, in general believe this;—they believe, therefore, that these men are *not* ministers of Christ, and that their influence is extensively injurious to souls: yet, they continue united with them in a manner which implies that they *are;* they continue, therefore, to countenance them *as such,*—to support the awful delusion, and to be accessory to all the evils which that delusion occasions.

"Not to preach the Gospel," which the evangelical Clergy attribute to the majority of their brethren, is to say, in effect, that they are "deniers of fundamental doctrines," though not in the sense of their being Socinians. Of such, Mr. N. says, "I neither publicly nor privately own them to be ministers of Christ; I hold no communion with them as brethren, which I do with pious men of every name." This, however, cannot be admitted: for, he holds *church*-communion with them, and he holds, and can hold, church-communion *with no other ministers whatever.* It appears to me that it would be better to say, "True, I do not believe these men to be ministers of Christ at all,—this is my *private* opinion; yet, I hold church-communion with them, and *publicly* recognize them as such: but, observe, my union with them in the Church is founded not upon what they *are,* but upon what they *profess* to be; in my ecclesiastical relation to them, I know them only as ministers of the same apostolical body, that is, by supposition, true ministers; if they are not, the fault is theirs, not mine." Now, this answer, I think, "legally," satisfactory. It is sufficient to defend the union of light with darkness in the same Church, for

those whose consciences can be governed by words rather than facts. To minds of high moral feeling, however; to those, especially, who profess to be peculiarly conscientious, the objection still returns—"You believe certain individuals not to be ministers of Christ, yet you publicly sanction them as such;—you support *a system* which imposes them as such on the community;—you aid and assist this tremendous delusion. Now, what does *conscience* say to this?—conscience, not as soothed by an expedient and a subterfuge, but as enlightened by truth, governed by facts, alive to the consequences of the general inculcation of error, and anticipating the decisions of the judgment-seat on the system that protects it?"

It may be worth while, perhaps, to look at the bearing of this reasoning, and of these remarks, in the case of the Dissenters. I observe then, in the first place, that were the union of the three denominations religious and spiritual, like that of the union of ministers in a church, still it might be defended by the above reasoning. There is no Socinian denomination: the Socinians are not known at Red-cross Street; they are there as Presbyterians,—members of an originally orthodox body, part of which is orthodox still. I remember hearing one of them state, in his Presbyterian character, that he, and some other Presbyterian trustees of certain property, had considered they were bound to publish an edition of the Assembly's Catechism; that they had done so, or were thinking of it, or words to that effect. Now, the Evangelical Dissenter (supposing his union with the Socinian "deniers of fundamental doctrines" were *spiritual*) might reason, "that, in his ecclesiastical relation, he did not know them as such; he was publicly united to them as Presbyterians,—originally believers in the Assembly's Catechism,—by supposition orthodox ministers," &c. &c. This would be "legally" satisfactory; theoretically correct: but I think it would be very disingenuous, and morally indefensible This, however, is the argument by which the Evangelical

Clergy must defend their church-fellowship and communion with those whom they denominate, or deem, *anti*-evangelical. I observe, however, in the second place, that the union of the three denominations is *not* religious and spiritual; it is *not* that of a Church; it has nothing to do with doctrinal sentiments, and involves nothing like Christian communion; and, therefore, the Evangelical Dissenter has no necessity for the subterfuge of his less fortunate evangelical brother.

Finally,—Although I have no doubt as to the *lawfulness* of the union of the three denominations, I think there are grounds for doubting its *expediency*. I know of no good which it secures to the whole, commensurate with the evil which it occasions to some of its parts, — occasions, by public mistake on the one hand, and party misrepresentation on the other.

Of the determination not to bury a Socinian, I observe, that I much doubt whether a Clergyman *dare* refuse to bury any person, "according to the form in the Prayer-book," who has not been excommunicated. Were he to refuse, he would do so, I should think, at the peril of his superior's displeasure, or on "pain" of the expense necessary to establish by "legal evidence" the propriety of his conduct, if, indeed, permitted to establish it. With respect to the form "being *meant* for those exclusively whom we may hope to have died in the faith," I remark, in the first place, that it corroborates what I have already said of the service proceeding on the supposition of the safety of the departed; and, secondly, I put it to the candour of Mr. Noel to say, what most Clergymen *really know*, or can *reasonably hope*, of nine-tenths of the persons they bury? The very reason which the Clergyman, mentioned in my former pamphlet, gave for asking another to bury a Socinian for him, was, that he would "*not* know his character," and on this ignorance he was to express a hope which can only be founded on knowledge! It was taken for granted that he would at

once do it; that he would use over one character, a service "exclusively meant" for another, without asking a single question, — I suppose "for conscience' sake." I would ask, not whether the Clergy do not every day use this service over those of whom they know nothing; but whether, if they were even to know that they were those for whom it was never meant, they could not still be legally compelled to use it? Is not this awful? Can such a system be defended? Can *they* be defended, who, professing to have abandoned "expediency," support and sanction this system?—one, for which conscience can urge nothing, and for which expediency alone can apologize.

"What makes me the rather question," &c. An argument may be just, though not employed by our forefathers. Were any of the Clergy to leave the Church now, simply on account of its corruptions, it is very probable their successors would detect something inherently defective in its constitution. "Seceders generally discover, in their progress, several reasons to fortify the original and principal ground of secession."* The fact is, however, that what I particularly urged upon Mr. N. is to be found, in substance, among the "original and principal" grounds of nonconformity—namely, the nature of the Service-book, and the obligation to use it when conscience pronounced that it was improper and delusive. With respect to "the spirit" that at first "presided over the councils" of the Establishment, I observe, that that spirit prevailed, and subdued every thing to itself; the consequence was, that it left its impress and superscription on the system, stamped it with its own character, and formed and moulded it by its own image. To become a minister of the Establishment, I must cut myself off from communion with every other Church under heaven; I must consent to stand as a solitary schismatic, bound hand and foot by the most tyrannical sectarianism. Now, with my principles

* Christian Remembrancer, June 1832, on the Bible Society Question.

respecting the positive obligation of Christians, to aim at attaining and preserving the visible union of the Church, which can only be done by intercommunion between its parts, I could not consent to be this. This, however, the "sectarian spirit," which presided over the councils of the Establishment, commands. The feeling of *individuals* may be different, but they have no power to act upon that. Let us see.

"I regret," &c. The whole of this passage shews, that a truly Christian mind, possessing all the feelings which would contribute to, and delight in, the unity of the Church, finds no little difficulty in defending a system which directly violates it.—To hold full communion with a minister whose "orders" are "recognized" as "valid," and yet, not be able to admit him to your pulpit, appears to me a contradiction. The cases of two persons are very different, one of whom you *will* not allow to preach, because, though a good man, he vents "mischievous peculiarities;" the other of whom you *cannot* and *dare* not, though he does no such thing. That system, which shuts our pulpits against those with whom we harmonize in every point, and opens them to those with whom we do not—the exclusion of the one being imperative by the law of the system; of the other, the admission being legal, and the exclusion only from personal feeling—this has not in it those principles of Christian communion, by which the unity of the Church must be recovered and maintained. If, indeed, it claims to be itself exclusively the Church—if it un-churches all other Churches, and un-ministers all other ministers, it is consistent; and those *who believe this* may consistently belong to it:—to all others, however, whether belonging to it or not, who admit other denominations to be parts of the Church, and the "orders" of their ministers to be "valid," it must appear to be an institution decidedly "sectarian," and, so long as it exists as it is, to be an obstacle to the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ, and to the visible union of "his body, the Church."

My heart's desire and prayer to God is, that the sectarianism of all Churches were brought to an end;—that each possessed the power, and would use the privilege, of communion with all. This would be beginning at the right end. Hitherto it has been attempted to force uniformity, the consequence of which will ever be disunion; I would have all study to be united, and then greater uniformity would follow. All would feel that they were brethren, when they could exchange the tokens of brotherhood; they would walk in the light of love, and in that light they would see more *alike* than they ever will in any other. The Church would then really be one, by the mutual recognition in all its parts of the character of each; and be known to be so, by the practice of visible communion and fellowship. This would be a two-edged sword, destructive to indifference and infidelity without, and to schism and bigotry within. Few, however, I fear, are prepared for this last experiment of love, for healing the wounds of the Church, and terminating the contempt of the world. The temper of the times, if we may judge from the publications of *all* parties, seems violently opposed to conciliation. I sometimes hope that there may be many pure and elevated spirits concealed, who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of confusion; who are anxious to end the dissensions of the pious, that all may go forth in one united phalanx against ungodliness and sin; who feel that we have a common enemy, and ought to avoid becoming enemies to each other; and who, therefore, are prepared, or preparing, for taking advantage of any circumstances, which shall facilitate the application of the oil of charity to the agitated waters of strife and debate. May it be so! and may it soon be discovered by a disposition, in some of all Churches, to substitute calm and brotherly conference, for burning and bitter controversy!

No. II.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

PAGE 70, LINE 1.

Evangelical Party.] With the fact before our eyes, of the divided state of the Clergy; the fact which every body knows, that there are two great "parties," each claiming to be the only true churchmen, and thus virtually excommunicating the other; the fact, too, that, within and among these, are to be met with all possible varieties of religious opinion; it is curious to see statements, like the following, confidently made, just as if they were true: They appear in the *British Magazine* for July. "As we consider our association a matter of divine institution, we *cannot* break into sects and parties; as we believe it to be our duty to 'obey our rulers,' in whom we recognize the regular and undoubted successors of the apostles, we are left free from all the turmoil and mischiefs of a spiritual democracy and anarchy. We listen, with teachable minds, to the admonitions of the ministers of Christ, and are thus preserved from the assaults of Antinomianism, Socinianism, and other heresies." Now, not to mention that often, on one clergyman being succeeded by another of *opposite* sentiments, (both having signed the same Articles, and being ministers of the same uniform, united, and apostolic church,) many of the parishioners have seceded and built a meeting-house, which, properly speaking, was the *church* "breaking into sects and parties," not dissent multiplying itself; not to mention this, it is sufficient to observe, that the Establishment *can* include within itself sects and parties, and heresies too. It will not be denied that there are the Orthodox and the Evangelical parties; the Calvinistic and

the Arminian clergy; and then, what was Dr. Hawker, Dr. Parr, Mr. Clowes (late rector of St. John's, Manchester)? If one Antinomian, one Socinian or Arian, and one Swedenborgian, may belong to the ministry of the Church, others may. The plain truth is, that the only difference between the Church and other sects consists in this: that, in the Church, the heretic is generally retained, and continues to be of it: in other cases, as there is nothing to stay for, he takes his departure, and the body is rid of him; or he is discountenanced and dismissed. Among the ministers of the Congregational order, I believe there is as complete and sincere a uniformity of sentiment as is possible to exist. I know not whether, among the entire number recognized as properly belonging to the denomination, there be *any* even *suspected* of either "not preaching the Gospel" or of denying or concealing a single fundamental truth. There is "no schism in the body" between an evangelical and an anti-evangelical party.—The reader may sometimes have observed in a lump of ice, feathers, bits of straw, pieces of earth, and fragments of crockery, all bound together, and kept together in one united mass, by a power distinct from that of natural affinity or attraction between the substances themselves. This, (let him imagine other intrinsically valuable substances to be there, and the figure will be complete,)—this is no bad emblem of the *kind* of union that exists in the Church, and the kind of freedom it enjoys from parties and heresies. Even when mechanically ONE, you can see something of the heterogeneous character of the substances that form the "united mass;" but when the sun dissolves the force that unites them, the impossibility of their natural cohesion is evinced. So in the Establishment. There is much *now*, to shew to those who will either observe or reflect, what *that* is, whose oneness is so lauded; but, if any thing were to dissolve the *force* by which its discordant parts are held in adhesion, it would then be seen of what contending materials it is composed,

and how "contrary the one to the other," are many of those "ministers of Christ," and "undoubted successors of the apostles," at whose feet the writer now quoted sits so delightedly.

PAGE 72, LINE 18.

I much doubt whether a Clergyman dare refuse to bury any person according to the form in the Prayer-book, who has not been excommunicated.] Mr. Tiptaft, in his "Letter to the Bishop of Salisbury, containing various reasons why he resigns his living, and cannot continue a Minister of the Church of England," says, "I object to the burial service, as I am *obliged* to read it over all, and it is in no way appropriate except for the few who die in the Lord; therefore, if an infidel, *Socinian*, drunkard, swearer, fornicator, or a covetous person, die, without shewing the slightest penitence, I *must use* the following words: 'Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed.' As my parish contains 1,300 inhabitants, such a grievous occasion frequently occurs as must necessarily harrow my conscience."

This statement deserves, I think, the attention of the "Layman," and that of his friends, to whom I have referred in the preceding Letter. I never heard of Mr. Tiptaft making eloquent professions of conscientiousness, about his not daring to *appear* to recognize the Socinian as a Christian in connexion with the Bible Society; but I here find that he *has* a conscience, and that he *acts* upon it, in relation to *calling* him one in the services of the Church. For any thing I can tell, Mr. T. may be a weak man, and, in many respects, a mistaken man. I cannot but consider, however, that he has set an example which (on their own

principles) it would dignify some of finer genius, and higher orthodoxy, humbly to follow. I can sincerely pity clergymen who feel the burden of their situation, and groan under their bondage; I can sympathize with them in their wish, for the sake of usefulness, to comply, if possible, with that from which they suffer so much; and I can understand how, "on the principle of expediency," they may persuade themselves to do this. I would unwillingly wound feelings like theirs, pained and lacerated as they are already. There are others, however, of another stamp: those who condemn "expediency" in one place, and act upon it in another! whose tender conscience and moral sensibility are ever on their tongues, and apparently *only* there; and in such I see nothing either to move compassion or to mitigate reproof.

The name of Mr. Tiptaft reminds me of something which bears both upon this note and the preceding: upon the fact of the absence of real uniformity in the Church, as acknowledged by churchmen, and the value universally attached to honesty and consistency. In noticing his letter, the *British Magazine* says, "Mr. Tiptaft has taken the only course consistent, in his case, with honesty, by resigning his living." The *Christian Remembrancer* remarks, "We think the Church would be well rid of divers others, who, with the same notions, have not the same honesty as this reverend nonconformist."

PAGE 73, LINE 9.

Can such a system be defended?]—In Mr. Noel's late pamphlet in defence of the Bible Society, he replies to the objections of the seceders; and as in one of his answers he adverts to the services of the Church, it may not be improper to introduce it here, accompanying it with a passing remark.

Let me request the reader, in justice to Mr. Noel, first to read over all the passages in small type in connexion with each other, omitting the remarks between them; and then to take them separately with the comment.

" Objection.—If any (Socinians) are blinded through the name (Christians), which we volunteer to give them (for we might have admitted them under another name), we are properly chargeable with the results.

" Answer.—If they were blinded without any fault of theirs, you would be responsible; but not so, when your meaning is obvious to common sense.

" In the Church Catechism we teach the child to say, that he was in baptism made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Is the " meaning" of this " obvious to common sense?" Is the import of these terms settled and certain? Are churchmen themselves agreed upon it? Have these terms a *double* meaning—a ceremonial and a spiritual? In *which* of these is the child taught to use them? Do clergymen, in using the terms, all use them in one sense, and *mean* by them the same thing? If not, who shall say that the meaning can be always obvious to others?

" What do men mean," exclaims Mr. Bradley, of Clapham, " when they say that the mere sprinkling of water can reach our earthly minds and regenerate us?"—"Aye," rejoins his reviewer in the *British Critic*,—a member, and probably a *minister*, of the same communion,—" What indeed! But who are they that venture on any such assertion? Most assuredly not the *sound* members of the Church of England, for *they* are taught by her *that the Spirit of God is present* to sanctify the water to the mystical washing away of sin; and that *all* who are brought to *the laver of regeneration* then receive what, by natural birth, they cannot have."

"If an ungodly parent thence infers that his child was regenerate through that ceremony, and therefore secure of heaven, who would be responsible for his mistake?"

Can any parent, from the words used at the ceremony, rationally infer any thing *but* that his child was regenerate? " We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to REGENERATE *this infant* WITH THY HOLY SPIRIT, to receive him for thine own child BY ADOPTION," &c. Is the meaning of this obvious to common sense? *Evangelical* clergymen generally teach, that if a human being is once *spiritually* regenerated and born of God, he cannot be unborn: " He that hath begun a good work in him will carry it on to the day of redemption." Is it " obvious," that, to be regenerate *by the Holy Spirit*, means, *not* to be regenerate *by the Holy Spirit*, but in some other way unconnected with ultimate safety? Has the term, " the Holy Spirit," a double meaning, as well as others? If amid all this uncertainty a person *should* mistake, who is to be responsible? Who?

" In the Burial Service we say, that it has pleased God to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother, and give thanks that he is delivered from the miseries of this sinful world."

It is said that "God, *of his great mercy*, has taken to himself the soul of our dear brother." To take the soul to himself is a phrase founded upon the words of Christ to his disciples: " I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also;" that is, in glory and happiness. The phrase is of the same import with the expressions in the other prayer respecting " the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord," dwelling with him " in joy and felicity." If God thus takes a soul to himself; takes it " *of his great mercy*," (not in his wrath,) the meaning " obvious to common sense," is, that that soul is saved—is in heaven. All this, indeed, is admitted by Mr. N., who regards the service as intended " exclusively for those whom we may hope to have died in the faith." Over those, therefore, of whom there is this hope, it is to be used—" exclusively."

" If ungodly survivors, convinced that they are not more ungodly than was the departed person, thence infer that they will also be taken to God when they die, who will be responsible for their mistake ?"

Why, if, confiding in the honesty and conscientiousness of the minister,—thinking that he believes what he says, and knowing that they are not worse than those for whom he gives thanks,—if hence they draw the " obvious " conclusion that therefore they are safe, and may expect the same service to be said over them, and may be " hoped," like their friend, " to have died in the faith," I should say, the Church is responsible for this—the Church that originates the delusion, and her ministers who encourage and sanction it.

" If the mistake which may be made by the Unitarian, respecting the name Christian, should make us withdraw from the Bible Society, the mistake which may be made by ungodly parents and survivors, through our use of the baptismal and burial services, should make us withdraw from the Establishment."

Unquestionably. The *conscientious* dissenters from the Bible Society ought not to remain in the Church another day, Mr. Noel being judge.

The reader will remember that this *conclusion* does not at all affect Mr. Noel, as he is not now a dissenter from the Bible Society, having expressed his conviction of the propriety of continuing united with it. I wish it also to be recollected that, in this note, and in the preceding pages of this appendix, I have not so much thought of Mr. Noel, as of such and such sentiments and opinions; and have written with a view to *them*. Mr. N., I believe, will be the last man to take offence at any thing I have said, as I am sure I should be the last to give it,—at least to *him*.

PAGE 74, LINE 9 FROM BOTTOM.

If it un-churches all other churches, and un-ministers all other ministers.] This seems to be the claim of the Church of England, according to her constitutions and canons. The 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th canons bear, more or less, upon this subject, and appear to involve this pretension. A genuine churchman does not hesitate to profess this; and certainly it does seem as if consistency required it. A clergyman, in conversation with me lately, denied that any could be true and "valid" ministers but those of his church. Another, whom I knew as a fellow-student, reproved, I have been told, a brother clergyman for speaking of dissenting teachers as ministers of Christ. A certain Rev. Justly Hill (I believe archdeacon of Buckingham), is very express on the point; and, in a sermon preached before the Bishop of Lincoln, and the clergy of the deanery of Buckingham, speaks of it with a warmth which the importance of the subject, and the nature of his audience required. He represents, in effect, the pretension to validity of orders by a dissenter, as the crowning abomination of error, rising in atrocity far above the denial of fundamental truth, and appearing *now* as if to show that we have arrived at the last stage of degeneracy, and to mark the awful character of " these our times." His words are, " It is true, indeed, that, almost from the first promulgation of the Gospel, there have not been wanting those who have denied or endeavoured to controvert the principal and fundamental articles of our holy belief; *yet has it been reserved to our own times* to see self-constituted and unauthorized teachers of religion adopting the characteristic forms, and assuming the professional title of respect and reverence, hitherto prefixed only to the names of those who have been regularly separated and ordained to the ministry, according to the usage of the apostles; I

say, according to the usage of the apostles; for,"* &c. &c. I much fear that Mr. Noel has said respecting us what he will get few of his brethren to confirm, and what the "Spirit" of his church, if not the language of her laws, forbids. It is difficult to know how far the clergy consider themselves as assenting to the canons, and bound to admit them as regulating their ecclesiastical belief. It is said by some that they only subscribe the three articles of the thirty-sixth canon. But then the first of these is the acknowledgment of the king being "Supreme Governor of the Realm, as well in spiritual or ecclesiastical things, as temporal;" and HE, in the letters patent, says, "We do not only *by our said prerogative royal, and supreme authority in causes ecclesiastical,* ratify, confirm, and establish, by these our letters patent, the said canons, orders, ordinances, and constitutions, and all and every thing in them contained * * *, but do likewise propound, publish, and straightway *enjoin and command * * * the same to be diligently observed, executed, and equally kept,*" &c. &c.; so that it would seem as if subscription to the first article of the thirty-sixth canon, "like Aaron's serpent, swallows *all* the rest." The demands, indeed, of the Church, from her ministers, in the terms of subscription, are immense, and the form employed very particular, expressly, it is said, "for the avoiding all ambiguities." It seems to me that there are some professedly *very* conscientious men who habitually violate what they have subscribed; how they satisfy themselves without having recourse to some *extremely questionable* "principle of expediency," I cannot imagine, nor am I required to decide.

* He explains, in a note, that he refers to the term "*reverend*" as applied to Methodist and Dissenting ministers.

No. III.

CURSORY REMARKS

RELATING TO SOME EXPRESSIONS IN THE LETTER TO A DISSENTER.

PAGE 46, LINE 10.

"*Without giving an opinion on the general question, whether a christian government might not, as such, do something for the promotion of religion, &c.*"] The two extreme opinions upon this subject seem to be these:—*First,* that it is the duty of a christian government to take the Church,—that is, a particular christian sect,—into protection and alliance; to endow and dignify it; to call its creed the national religion; and, in consequence of this, to regard, *in many respects,* the nation as the Church; to support the favoured sect by direct taxation, "compelling" the people "to build its churches and pay its ministers." *Second,* that the government, although christian, has nothing to do with the Church, or with any christian sect at all, but *to let it alone;* that, while the chief magistrate, or individual members of the legislature, may and ought to aid religion in their private capacity by their holy example and voluntary contributions; yet the government itself, as such, is sacredly to refrain from encumbering it with help. Did it ever strike you that perhaps *both* these opinions might be wrong? as, indeed, extreme opinions generally are,—the extreme opposite to error not being, in all cases, truth. In the present case you and I are

agreed as to the erroneousness of the first opinion. Even admitting that the silence of the New Testament on the subject of an establishment is not condemnation, but that it leaves it to be tried as a matter of expediency, we have learned to think that expediency is against it. "This day is poison poured into the Church," said a voice from heaven, on that in which she consented to an alliance with the world. Such is the fable,—but it is pregnant with truth. The history of Christendom is a comment on its correctness. The Church, when allied to the State, has always been injured. This union has never promoted religion; it has obstructed and debased it. Establishments have a necessary tendency to rest, stillness, death. They cheat the mass of the people with a delusive notion of their personal Christianity; and they facilitate the introduction to the sacred office of the blind and the bad. Never, in their combined and collective capacity,—never as *Institutions*, have they been the source of any grand movement for the benefit of mankind. *They* have always been needing reformation and improvement: and reformation and improvement have never been their own spontaneous act; they have invariably been forced upon them from without: or if they have been urged by individuals within, it has been in opposition to the hostility of the general body. In these views, whether right or wrong, you and I coincide. But, may there not be a difference between "alliance,"—between "establishment,"—between uniting exclusively with a particular sect, and sending it forth "armed," as Mr. Cunningham,* *with terrible appropriateness*, describes the "principle" of this proceeding,—

* When Mr. C. speaks of the "principle" of dissent, he describes a person as going forth, "furnished" with it. The difference in the terms is remarkable, and shews a just apprehension of the difference between the subjects to which they are applied. A man, intending good to others, may go forth "furnished" with many things,—with food or medicines, with the powers of persuasion, or the language of love; but he can only go "*armed*" with weapons.

"armed" with the sword of the magistrate to "compel," at the point of it,—at the peril of the seizure of their goods or the imprisonment of their persons,—all, without exception, to "build her churches and pay her ministers:" may there not be a difference between this, on the part of a government, and simple assistance,—assistance in the form either of occasional grants, or of permanent endowments?

The Church of Christ,—meaning by the term all evangelical denominations,—may be considered as a standing Missionary Society. It has to "preach the gospel to every creature;" to maintain it where it is, and to send it where it is not. None can hear without preachers, and preachers cannot live without they are supported. Now, leaving out of view other countries, let us remark that there are, and probably always will be, places in our own, so poor, and so thinly populated, that they cannot support a minister without foreign assistance,—at least none sufficiently qualified for the office. This assistance must be obtained, or the people perish. Supposing it to be obtained; then, from whatever source,—whether the munificence of an individual, or the united contributions of a society,—it is, *to the people themselves*, a gift, assistance, endowment, or whatever you please to call it,—something which renders it impossible to be said, that, in *their* case, religion is supported on the simple principle that "he that is taught in the word communicates to him that teacheth." This mode of assisting religion, in addition to the voluntary contributions of the people, must, in certain places, be constantly had recourse to, or it will dwindle to nothing; and it rests as a solemn obligation upon the Church of God to find this assistance to the utmost of its power: so that opulent individuals and large societies are bound, not only to provide religion for themselves, but for those whose need of it is as great as their own, but whose means of procuring it are less. This is the duty of the Church, as such, not of human governments, as such; but I ask would it be *wrong* for a

government, professedly christian, to vote occasional grants to any denomination or denominations, to be employed under the combined piety and wisdom of the body, in the promotion of these ends, which it is *bound* to pursue, but which it may be crippled in accomplishing? Would this be *wrong?* Would the Home Missionary Society refuse such a grant? Would the Surrey Mission refuse it? Would our county associations, struggling as they are with inadequate resources to overtake the ignorance and heathenism of their respective districts? Would it be *sinful* for Government to offer this assistance, or for these associated bodies to accept it? Or, take your own case; you and your people will soon perhaps be destitute of a place of worship,—not to say that for the convenient and efficient fulfilment of many of the objects to be accomplished by a church, you need one now. Suppose then, that the Corporation of the City of London were to offer to give you a piece of ground, or to "build you a synagogue,"—would you and your people decline it? I go no farther. I do not suppose them to make you an alderman, and to give you a seat in the *City* house of Lords; to expect you to be there to uphold their authority, and to assist *them* by your vote on party and political questions. You may smile at this idea, but, were it realized, it would only be a repetition of what *has* been. In olden time, the Prior of the Convent of the Holy Trinity, called Christ Church, situated about what is now Duke's Place, St. Mary Axe, was always the Alderman of Portsoken-Ward; he had the temporal powers, and discharged the secular duties of one, (unless he was very pious, and appointed a deputy,) and, on public days, rode through the city with the municipal Lords, but distinguished, like the Bishops in another place, by his monastic or clerical habit. I do not imagine any thing of an "alliance" like this: much less that the Lord Mayor should have the power to translate you to another charge; or that he, the Alderman and Common Council should settle, by their authority, the articles, and laws, and

liturgy of your Church. I suppose you to maintain your spiritual independence, but to be offered by the city what I suppose you would take from Thomas Wilson, Esq. if he would give it; and I ask, would you deem it your duty resolutely to refuse it?—I may remark, in passing, that I dare say many would condemn the absurdity of such a *municipal* "alliance" between the Church and the world as that to which I have adverted, who see nothing but "the perfection of beauty" in it when it happens to be enlarged, and to be made big enough to cover a kingdom.

Whether it would be right or wrong in a Government, professedly christian, to give assistance to religion by grants or endowments, it would, I think, be wrong to confine that assistance to one sect; to confer upon a portion of the community the power to tax the whole, and, in various respects, to treat and contemplate the whole as if they belonged to it. It would be wrong to connect assistance with degrading conditions or secular dignity; to compromise the independent and spiritual character of religious communities; or, in short, to produce any thing like what we mean by the union of Church and State—the compulsory establishment of the one by the "arms" of the other.

But, wherever extensive endowments, or, in other words, *the means of usefulness*, are possessed; there is possessed along with them, from the condition of human nature, a great liability to perversion and abuse. If any denomination were to have placed at its disposal considerable funds, there would require, for their effective employment, some kind of combination in the body itself, and vigilant supervision of its parts and its agents;—that is, there must be in it both union and authority. Small, separate, independent societies, are, in the end, more likely to be injured than benefited by endowments. Pecuniary grants, to be properly employed, require a society sufficiently large, and cooperation sufficiently real, to invest some with the powers of direction, investigation,

and government; which powers shall be respected and effective,—while, at the same time, their exercise shall not be arbitrary or irresponsible, but shall be regulated by rules, and be subject to the general judgment. Even a large society, as well as a small one, will become imbecile, useless, or worse than useless, by the enjoyment of funds which cost it nothing, and upon which it can certainly calculate, if it be either so badly constituted as to lead to passive obedience and pure despotism; or so distinguished above others equally deserving, as to be proudly puffed up with a notion of nationality.

Whatever may be thought about the propriety of any government *beginning* a system of assistance to religious bodies; a thing which, after all that can be said for it, I admit to be very questionable; still, in this country, the subject of church-endowments is immensely important, from the unparalleled extent in which they exist. *They*, in fact, with their legal adjuncts and consequences, are the Church of England; for, if annihilated, the episcopal denomination might remain, but the *Establishment* would have vanished.

What appears to me the *common-sense* view of the "Church and its endowments," as Dr. Dealtry would express it, may be given in very few words. Funds, acknowledged to be large, exist among us in the shape of property *professedly devoted to God;* that is, intended to provide for the service of God in order to promote the religious benefit of the people. This property has arisen, or arises, from the bequests of the pious, government grants, and direct taxation. Now, of all benevolent bequests Government is the ultimate trustee; it can modify their use, or change their destination, whenever an obvious necessity requires it: hence, it can authorize the Directors of the Harpur Charity, at Bedford, to apply a portion of their funds to objects not contemplated by him who bestowed them; hence too, it can divert what was left to support popery in general, or to provide masses for the souls

of particular individuals, to the use of protestant literary or religious institutions. Again: Whatever Government gives for the public advantage,—for the public advantage it can resume; it ought to do so, if enlightened public opinion demand it;—public opinion may demand, in such a case, the one of two things—either, that the grant be discontinued entirely, being found by experience to be injurious rather than beneficial; or, that it be discontinued as to its *form*, but still made in *fact*, though under a new modification.

Church-property is really the property of the nation. It has been left, or granted, as has been said, not for the private and pecuniary benefit of individuals who may happen to possess it, but for the religious benefit of the whole commonwealth. If this is not consulted or secured by its appropriation, the people have a right to demand that it should. It is property held upon certain conditions, and if these conditions are not fulfilled, the nation, whose property it really is, must look out for those who *will* fulfil them;—those who are willing to do its work, and able to do it well: and, if it should be satisfied—rationally and religiously satisfied—that the creation of such property was a blunder and a mistake; that it has proved, and will ever prove, an obstacle to the attainment of those very ends which it is professedly intended to promote; that, in fact, the conditions on which it is held will be better fulfilled without it: then—I do not hesitate to think, that it has the right—the legal and moral right—to annihilate it all, by devoting it to other objects of public utility.

On these principles some persons have advocated the application of Church property to the payment of the national debt. To me this appears to be a premature and violent proposition. I admit, that I think circumstances might authorize this; that is, *when* it should be completely proved to the intelligence and piety of the people, that this would be more for the glory of God, and the promotion of his cause, than putting it to any religious

use. If, because property has been left to be employed in a certain way, it is to continue to be so employed in spite of all the lessons of experience to prove it an evil; this would not only be to consent to the continuance of the evil, but it would be to make the dead the legislators of the living,—to give the power of government to the grave,—to make the mistakes of the child imperative maxims for the man. I admit, therefore, the power of Government, or of the people speaking through their legitimate organs, to make the proposed secular use of the funds of the Church; but I dispute its policy and propriety. Grant that the present religious appropriation of ecclesiastical property has been proved to be an evil, it has not been proved that *all* such appropriation must be so. As yet, this property is "*corban*;"—and so let it remain. It was once employed in a form different from the present, and failed; admit that it has failed again,—still, this does not forbid that some other mode should be tried before the possibility of using it to any good purpose be given up as utterly hopeless.

Lord Henley and others,—some, (like the noble and excellent person just mentioned,) from the best motives, and some from the most base, have suggested certain new modes for the use and distribution of the endowments of the Church. Two, either of which, upon the common-sense principles I have laid down, I should deem to be perfectly equitable, have occurred to myself;—I will describe them in three or four sentences.

I suppose, as a preliminary step to every "plan of Church-reform," and therefore to either of mine, that *direct* taxes and cesses in support of one sect should cease. This done, then, as to the positive property of the Church, it may, in the *first* place, be put into the hands of certain trustees or commissioners in different districts, for the exclusive advantage of the Episcopal denomination. That body must henceforth meet its own expences, ("build its churches and pay its ministers") by the voluntary liberality

of its members added to its endowments. The trustees or commissioners would be required to appropriate the funds entrusted to them, to those places and persons most in need of foreign assistance. In large towns, or in most of the congregations in large towns, they would find that religion would support itself; certain villages and rural districts would demand the greatest share of their attention, and to these it would be their business to attend. Upon this plan, the Episcopal denomination would be placed on a level with every other, with the exception that it would be the richest of all in its positive possessions. If it were ever afterwards thought proper for Government to make any grants to assist religion, other bodies would have the first claim to their enjoyment: Government might say to the Episcopal, "You have had *your* share of assistance already." But, in the *second* place, there is another plan of dealing with ecclesiastical endowments, in order to secure by them the greatest possible source of good upon the whole. They are, as has been said, possessed by the nation for the general advantage; their object and intention, therefore, would be fulfilled if appropriated to the support of religion *by whomsoever it was taught:* on this principle, they might be divided among the most active and important of the dissenting denominations in common with that at present possessing them, and in the manner and for the purposes already explained. I am well aware, that many of your brethren in the dissenting ministry, would be startled by this idea, and would loudly condemn it. They would neither consent to receive assistance from Government, nor to accept the least portion of Church-property. These feelings are to be honoured, and they should be known. They arise from the belief that all aid beyond the voluntary contributions of the people is injurious to the Church, if not positively antichristian; and they condemn the calumny so often reiterated, that the opposition of Dissenters to the Church is interested and selfish;—that they only wish her to fall that there might be

a scramble for her wealth, and that in the struggle they might have the chance of purloining a part of it for themselves. I state, however, my opinion, although I know that few Dissenters would wish to see it realized, whatever they might think of its theoretical justice. The Ecclesiastical endowments, of which the nation is the owner, and the Government the trustee, or of which the Government is the trustee *for the benefit of the nation*, might then, I repeat, be equitably appropriated in the manner last described, if these two parties should mutually agree to it; they are intended to promote a certain object, and they may be made, by Act of Parliament, the legal property of any sect or sects by whom that object may be best accomplished; they may be given to whatever body the Government in its wisdom might determine—whether Episcopalian or Independent, Methodist or Quaker—to any one, or to all.

Every thing I have advanced could, I believe, be illustrated and defended by much which I have occasionally met with in the writings of churchmen themselves. Indeed, the claims of the clergy to have their endowments considered as sacred and as inviolable as private property, are not only inconsistent with the fact that they are conditional, and held expressly for the public benefit, which private property is not; but, if carried fully and fairly out, will be found inconveniently to prove too much; for they will prove the title of their present possessors to be null and void—vitiated to the very core. Surely, if church-propertywere at any time inviolable, it was when enjoyed by those to whom it was expressly given or bequeathed. However it may be attempted to find the Church of England in a remote antiquity, unconnected with and uncorrupted by Rome, it must also be admitted that, as Roman, she became possessed of most of her wealth, and that her priests, as Catholic, had, by usage and time, and other tenures, every right to consider it as inalienable property. The public benefit, however, required that it

should change hands, and it was given to those who possess it now. The Clergy, therefore, who are so alive to the security of "the Church and its endowments," must just admit the one or the other of two things:—either that, as they hold these endowments purely upon prescription, simply by virtue of an Act of Parliament,—therefore, they may be required to give them up with the same propriety with which they were chosen to receive them; what they justify Government in doing once, they must justify Government in doing again: or, if they deny this; if they will insist on the inviolability of "church-endowments," then they must admit, that this only substantiates the claim of the *former* Clergy,—annihilates their own,—and gives colour to what they deem the calumny of the Catholics when they speak of them as "the receivers of stolen goods."

PAGE 47, LINE 3.

"*A Lie.*"] This is an offensive expression. As it is employed, however, in relation to yourself, on a certain supposition, it may be excused if not justified. Language, equally strong, is to be found in the writings of churchmen; for instance, "No one who has read the Articles of our Church, before he affixed his signature to them at ordination, can hesitate, unless he is prepared to take upon himself the *foul stains of perjury and apostasy*, in maintaining every clause of the Athanasian Creed, literally and without equivocation." *British Critic*, No. XXXII. A clergyman who has just left the Church says, "During nearly twenty years the author laboured in the ministry of the Gospel in the Established Church. As a young man, fresh from the University, he was a conscientious churchman, and *published largely in its favour*. Subsequent reflection and consideration, however, excited doubts as to the soundness of his own principles; and, during twelve

years, he had frequently, *from the press*, declared his dissatisfaction with much of the existing system; and so strong were his convictions of the anti-scripturality of many parts of the constitution, doctrine, and discipline of the Established Church, that he was obliged to relinquish the *offer* and hope of preferment, through inability, conscientiously, to make the necessary subscription of his unfeigned belief and approbation 'of all things contained and prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer.' As he could not make the required subscriptions without *traitorous perjury*, so he found it impossible to remain nominally a churchman without *base hypocrisy*."

PAGE 48, LINE 2.

"*Such dissent no churchman whatever can condemn.*"] You might have added that churchmen, under the sanction of the bishops and dignitaries of the Establishment, assert and defend the principle of such dissent. "If the Presbyterians, or Papists, were to-morrow the great majority of the nation, and if the constituted authorities of the land, king, lords, and commons, thinking either of these persuasions the best religion, were to establish it by law, I should then become a Dissenter. With my belief in the scriptural authority of episcopacy, I could not conscientiously be a Presbyterian; with my knowledge of the anti-scriptural doctrines of the Church of Rome, I must separate from her corrupt communion." *Wilks' Tract, entitled, "A Church Establishment lawful, scriptural, and necessary." Published by "The Society for promoting Christian (and 'Ecclesiastical') Knowledge."*

I have added the last epithet to this Society, without any ill feeling, without the least intention to give offence, but merely to intimate the idea which I form of its *full* and *complete* character, and to introduce the following

remarks, which I feel constrained to make. The Society in question was established and, I believe, is extensively endowed, for the purpose of promoting "Christian" knowledge. Thinking, however, (and, as Churchmen, probably thinking justly,) that a defence of the Establishment, and the condemnation of Dissent, were included in this, its committee have issued sundry tracts upon these subjects; some of which, I am sorry to say, contain expressions and passages discreditable to the Society, and offensive and injurious to Dissenters in general. Now, some Dissenters, without splendid patronage or large endowments,—with none upon the bench to compose their tracts or to assist them with their influence,—instituted a small society for the purpose of promoting "Ecclesiastical" knowledge; the very thing which the other Society had been doing in its publications—"On the Nature and Constitution of the Christian Church," "An Answer to the Question, Why are you a Churchman?" "Serious Address to the Seceders and *Sectarists* who exist in separation from the Church of England," "A Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist," &c. &c. Well, the offence of having instituted the dissenting society, is one apparently unpardonable. It has been the occasion of much coldness in private intercourse, and has been the ground, on the part of Clergymen, of a refusal to preach for institutions of a totally different character. *You* know, that I have no connexion with the offending society; that I have declined being on its committee, and declined writing for it; that I much question the propriety of the thing itself; and that I decidedly differ from some of the sentiments it has occasionally advocated. I think, therefore, that I am in a state favourable to impartiality; I put it, then, to the *justice* of Clergymen to say, whether they, of all men, are not the last that should complain, considering that they have been engaged in doing the very thing they object to, only under a name that concealed it? Oh! how sensitive we all are when we are personally injured! how

instinctively we recoil, and how distinctly we see the sin in the spirit or conduct of the assailant! and yet, all the time, we may have been "verily guilty concerning our brother," though, heedless of the truth, we may have also been congratulating ourselves on the purity and compass of our candour and charity! Such is human nature, both in the Church and out of it. How long will it be before we shall each try to mend ourselves as well as our neighbours! "Oh Lord, how long?"

PAGE 51, LINE 7 FROM BOTTOM.

"*There are important general principles involved or recognized, which, in their essence, are to be regarded in our conduct; but which, in their mode of operation, admit of being adapted to circumstances under a wise and holy expediency.*"] This is a sentiment recognized by the practice of all sects, whether they acknowledge it in theory or not; in fact, there is no possibility of regulating church proceedings, without having constant recourse to it. It might be illustrated in numberless particulars. It is essential, for instance, that those united in the fellowship of the Gospel should meet together in visible communion; but it is not essential *when* they meet, except on the Lord's Day. With respect to that, too, it is not essential at what hour they meet, how often they meet, or how long they are together: it is essential to meet for worship and instruction; but it is not essential that these should always be attended to in the same order, and the same proportions; it is not essential that prayer should be *with* a form, or without a form; it is not essential that there should *always* be preaching, that it should be introduced at the same part of the service, or continue for the same time. These *secondary* matters, these *modes* of carrying out the general principle, are all determined, as they ought to be, by expediency.

So of other things. It is essential that there should be discipline in receiving the credibly worthy to Christian privileges, and in debarring or excluding the unworthy; but it is not essential *by what precise formalities* either the one or the other of these objects is attained. In most dissenting churches, certain forms, connected with the first of these, for the pattern of which you examine the original model in vain, have come to be so fixed by custom, as that *they* take the place of the general principle, and are themselves invested with the character of New-Testament law. Again, it is essential that a church should have its bishop; but it is not essential how *many* bishops it should have: it may have two or ten, without infringing any principle gathered from the New Testament. The primitive churches appear generally, if not always, to have had a plurality of bishops; and I suppose the reason why our churches have, for the most part, only one, is because they cannot afford to have more; the state of Christianity, and of Christian churches, is so altered since primitive times, — a bishop is so much more expensive than in those days, — that expediency requires this departure from what then appears to have been general. Churches of any extent would find their account, I think, in returning in some measure to these primitive pluralities, —not of congregations under one pastor, but of pastors over one congregation. There might then be three or four services on the Sabbath in the same place, to meet the convenience of different classes, and to give all an equal chance of parallel advantages; Bible-classes, and Pastoral-visitation, could both be attended to more effectively; there would be a real and not nominal superintendence of schools and Christian-instruction societies; and lay-helpers could both be trained up to greater efficiency, and be directed and regulated with greater ease. There would be more *division of labour* in the details of the ministry, more of *that* which produces such surprising effects every where else, but which is never

thought of as applicable where it is so much needed, or which is felt, from circumstances, to be imperatively forbidden.

PAGE 52, LINE 2.

"*I question whether Congregationalists themselves, though impregnable in my opinion on the point of dissent from the Establishment, are either defensible or consistent in many of the parts and practices of their own system.*"] It is the fault of the public advocates of all parties to push their principles and their theories too far. In listening to some of your brethren, when delivering an introductory discourse at the ordination of a minister, in which they have explained, by their theory, the nature and constitution of a Christian church, I have said to myself, "how different, in many respects, you and your churches *are*, and how differently you really *act*, from the picture drawn and the principles defended." Two or three classes of inconsistencies strike me at this moment; I will give a specimen or two under each. If time permitted, or if I were writing a dissertation, I dare say I could enlarge the list, and certainly I should pay more attention to the dress and disposition of my remarks.

We are always directed, you know, in "introductory discourses," to the model,—the New Testament model. The principle of the Church of England, as episcopal and as established, and its customs or abuses in relation to pluralities, patronage, &c., are often pointedly exposed. The entire separation of the Church from the State; the impropriety of any aid or favour from government; the independence of each distinct Christian society; popular election of ministers; careful attention in every thing to primitive precedent, are advanced and maintained, and often with distinguished ability. Up to a certain point,

both the opposition and the advocacy are undeniably just; but I have often thought, that care should be taken, lest, when the man has done theorizing in the pulpit, and has come down to actual practice, he does not admit in principle, though not in name or degree, the very things against which his theory was directed.

Now as to every thing being inadmissible but what is prescribed by the model, and every thing binding that it includes:—is a college in the model? Are Highbury and Homerton provided for by primitive precedent? The first churches had a plurality of bishops,—have yours? The Lord's Supper every Lord's day, and mutual exhortation by the brethren, if able or disposed, are customs generally admitted to be primitive,—where are they now? Ministers are represented by the *theory*, agreeably to original custom, as called to the office *out of* the church which they are chosen to serve,—are yours so called? I have known, indeed, a young man go from a college, preach on probation, and be approved; then be dismissed from his original church, and become a member of that to which he had preached; and *then* be called or chosen, as a member of it, to the pastoral office over the rest of his brethren; all this I have known done to get fact and theory to coincide, that *that* might be attended to which was supposed to be the original custom, and which, as such, was further supposed to have the character of law. I admire the motive in the conduct described; but, is it possible that the parties could impose upon themselves the belief that they attained their object, or that there was the least similarity between their cumbrous contrivances and the primitive proceeding which they attempted to imitate? All these, and similar discrepancies between us and what the New Testament describes,—our doing in some cases too little, and in others too much,—these, I know, are completely defensible, on the ground of general principles and allowable expediency; they are defensible *only* upon this ground, and therefore it really does not

become us to talk so much about the beauty of the model, and the sin of expediency, when, in practice, we depart from the one and act upon the other.

Again; with respect to the principle that Government is to do nothing for the Church but to let it alone, and the jealousy of its interference in the minutest particular, let us see how the matter stands *in fact*. It seems to be admitted that a Christian government, as such,—not as so many individuals, but *as a government*,—may, and ought, to do something in relation to the Sabbath, that is, in relation to religion. The appointment of a Fast-Day, by the king in council, was, on a recent occasion, not only submitted to by the great body of Dissenters, but was adopted in preference to one fixed by themselves. There were two or three ministers who objected to the change, and who acted on their objections; and this conduct was by far the most consistent with *theoretical* independency. Again; your ministers do not refuse *every* government or political indulgence; they accept of exemption from military duty, and from serving on inquests and juries,—and they are right: it is of immense advantage that, free from such secular calls, they may "give themselves entirely to the word of God and to prayer:" but where is the *theory?* strictly keeping to *that*, what business has the Government to know them as ministers,—or as any thing but Englishmen? Laws, it seems then, *may* be made to confer special immunities upon ecclesiastics. Your chapels, too, under certain conditions, are exempt from taxation; nay, there is a parliamentary grant, formerly denominated the "REGIUM DONUM," annually voted for the augmentation of the small livings of dissenting ministers; this, though strongly objected to by some, is accepted by others; it is dispensed according to the individual discretion, I believe, of certain ministerial trustees, who have each a part at their disposal; and, I doubt not, it carries gladness to the habitation and the heart of many a worthy man. As to some other matters

that strike me, the shortest way to describe them will be to quote a case in which most of them meet. I take that of a minister (whom I have in my mind at the moment) supported by a county-mission: he is appointed by that body; he serves three churches,—that is, in three distinct villages he has a small number of communicants, who form in each place a separate church; he is pastor of all; he acts as such in the government of each society; and he preaches at each place once every Sabbath. Now, let us see what we have here. Here is patronage or foreign appointment perhaps lay-appointment, as the committee of the mission might consist at the time more of laymen than of ministers; here is episcopal superintendence and control, for, to the minister, the members of the said committee are in the place of an ecclesiastical superior; to them he is accountable, and by them he can be removed: here is plurality, three churches under one bishop; or, if they are considered as one church, (which, in the case I am contemplating, they are not,) then we have a church consisting of persons who do *not* meet together in one place. Here is single duty; here is "endowment," in the form of an annual grant from a fund not raised by the people who are instructed; that is, there is such extra assistance afforded the minister, in addition to what is raised by the voluntary principle,—assistance so important, that, if it were withdrawn, the man must remove, and the people perish. This instance shews that, however the theory may demand popular election to the pastoral office, support exclusively by voluntary offerings, the freedom of churches and ministers from foreign control,—yet, there are cases in which the advocates of these principles depart from them all; yes, and their departure is sanctified by the circumstance, that a benevolent and a holy *expediency* demands it; that thus they can secure a sum of good which an adherence to system would sacrifice or prevent.

You know me better than to suppose that I intend, by

these remarks, either to deny the correctness of the general principles of Congregationalism, or to defend the constitution or abuses of the Established Church. No: the very corruption of the Establishment creates the necessity for such dissenting anomalies as that which I have described; how different, too, are *its* patronage, pluralities, and episcopacy? I do mean, however, to shew, how impossible it is to preserve consistency when we take very high ground, and insist on all the minute points of some theoretical device: how necessary it is to be willing to modify our theory by circumstances; and how possible it is, that, if all would candidly acknowledge what they *do*, and would compare practice with practice rather than theory with theory, we might come nearer to some amicable adjustment, and learn to love ourselves less and our neighbours more. The time is coming, I think, when good men of all parties will feel that something must be mutually given up, and mutually admitted. The Church of England, considered as an Establishment, dividing the whole kingdom into parishes, and fixing a place of worship, a minister and a Bible in each,—looks all very beautiful upon paper, but it will not bear examination in *fact;* its practical working is against it; its *tendency* has been to produce drones, and to propagate darkness; activity has had to be excited by rivalship, and light to be forced upon it from without. Independency, too, is very beautiful in a book, and has often been seen to advantage in large towns; but it neither acts exclusively nor extensively purely on its own principles; nor, if it did, would it effect equal good with what it actually accomplishes. The world, in fact, is a gainer by the happy inconsistencies of all sects.

PAGE 59, LINE 18.

"*The Churchman has need to be on his guard lest, stung and exasperated by the present state of public opinion, he is tempted to find a malignant satisfaction in exaggerating the evils of minor communities.*"]

The "BRITISH MAGAZINE," commenced in February last, seems to have been established in the very spirit which this observation condemns. A series of articles has appeared in it, exhibiting various *admissions* which, in their honesty or their zeal, dissenting writers have at times made of the practical evils of their own system. The author of these papers seems to have had before him all the Magazines, Reviews, &c., in which he could find any thing suited to his purpose, and to have delighted to drag from their obscurity these scattered testimonies to the awful character of congregational churches! He principally quotes from the Eclectic Review and Binney's "Memoirs of the Rev. S. Morell." You may possibly have seen this latter work. It is long since I looked into it myself. It is so singular and extravagant in many parts, that it can hardly be considered, I should think, much of an authority. My impression, however, is, that, even in connexion with the very passages which are tranferred to the pages of the "British Magazine," there are others which would neutralize the *inferences* meant to be drawn from them, and the statements they are brought to substantiate. But it is not my intention to enter into this subject at present, further than to make the following remark respecting it. Of all modes of attacking Dissent, this is one of the worst to which the advocate of the Establishment can have recourse. He may string together the admissions of a few writers, and turn them against Dissent; but with tenfold interest can the Dissenter repay him by referring to the admissions of Churchmen! The partial evils of the congregational community, in which the public, as such, take no interest, may thus be exhibited within the British Magazine's circle of high-church admirers; and they may administer for a moment a pungent pleasure, or prompt a fallacious security;—it *will* be fallacious, and will soon be discovered to be so.

To neglect the beam in our own eye, and to be taken up with the detection, (by glasses too,) of the mote in our neighbour's, is the part neither of virtue nor of wisdom. Whatever may be the evils of Dissent, they are positively microscopic compared with those of the Church. The friends of the Establishment should not forget this. To do so is not the way to avert or alter the doom that threatens it. *Its* abuses, it should be remembered, are public and palpable; "they are seen and read of all men;" the mass of the people feel that they have an interest in their speedy removal; they *must* be removed, and that soon—for, in the present state of general opinion, it is impossible that they can be permitted much longer to insult earth and heaven by their continuance and their consequences.

I once thought of appending to this remark a few extracts from a recent publication, entitled, "The Present State of the Established Church,—an Apology for Secession from its Communion; by a Seceding Clergyman." I should have done this, just to shew how easily the argument of the *British Magazine* can be turned, with terrible emphasis, against the Establishment; but I forbear. The disclosures are too painful and disgusting to suffer me to transcribe them. May they have their proper effect where tehy ought to be felt!

PAGE 62, LINE 7.

"*Universal communion.*"]—Your Utopian notions upon this subject,—in which few, I believe, are prepared to coincide, and still fewer to attempt to realize, remind me of two passages which bear upon them in recent publications. The one is in Lord Henley's pamphlet on Church Reform, and the other in Mr. Hughes' Sermon on the Death of Robert Hall,—a chaste and beautiful composition. I shall give them without comment; except,

indeed, that the second will be a kind of comment on the first: it supplies what is wanting to make the picture complete. Lord Henley goes a great way, and deserves unquestionable credit for the liberal idea he has dared to indulge and to describe; but Mr. Hughes goes further, and suggests something for which his Lordship, I suspect, is still unprepared. *He* recommends ministerial and christian union *beyond* the precincts of the Church; Mr. Hughes would like to establish it *within* them: and it is this, and this only, which can convince the world that all evangelical denominations, though distinguished by minor diversities of view, form substantially, in sentiment, in feeling, and in fact, one Church.

LORD HENLEY.

"What a noble opportunity does the state of our populous towns present for the performance of one splendid act of christian magnanimity! What a spectacle would it be of the influence of true religion on the heart, if the Church of England, and the three more numerous bodies of Trinitarian Dissenters, forgetting all past causes of jealousy and irritation, would bury the remembrance of their trifling differences of doctrine in the glorious object of evangelizing the benighted millions that surround them! If they would but unite in one grand crusade against swearing, gin-drinking, Sabbath-breaking, disuse of prayer, alienation from ordinances, neglect of children, and all the abominations of a poor and ignorant population; and if they would be content to preach nothing, and to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, more would be done for the cause of religion than by thousands of sermons, or libraries full of theology. May we not hope that the days are fast approaching when 'Ephraim shall not *envy* Judah, and Judah shall not *vex* Ephraim,' but when both shall cheerfully unite in this great work and labour of love."

MR. HUGHES.

"He (Mr. Hall) was a *Baptist*—but he respected the right of private judgment; he conceded the liberty which he asked: and having, as he thought, no inspired precept or precedent for the deed, could not persuade himself to erect the ritual peculiarity of a small denomination into a barrier which should exclude from sacramental communion every denomination besides; though a Beveridge, and a Howe, and a Baxter, and a Wesley, and a Whitfield, and a Doddridge, and a Watts, stood without, soliciting the privilege of feasting with their brethren at the table of their common Lord.

"We may reasonably lament that such a saint and such a preacher, should not have been qualified, by civil and ecclesiastical laws, for preaching the 'unsearchable riches of Christ,' wherever a sanctuary stood, and a congregation was prepared and eager to receive him."

I might add to these "cursory remarks" considerably, but they have already extended perhaps too far: I therefore terminate them here.

A. B.

No. IV.

HINTS ON CHURCH REFORM,

AS APPLICABLE TO CONGREGATIONALISTS.

THE following paper is the production of an intelligent and distinguished friend,—one who feels deeply attached to the cause of the Dissenters, who has done much for it, and who anxiously wishes to promote its advancement. In a recent conversation with him, I found that he not only entertained many views in common with myself on the condition and prospects of the body to which we belong, but that he had occasionally thought of various measures of amendment and reform. I requested him to commit to writing a few hints on these topics; the following letter is the result, which I give to the reader verbatim and in full. I may not, perhaps, fall in with every sentiment contained in it, nor will he, I dare say, with all that *I* have expressed, nor will some of our readers with the suggestions of either. I consider the communication, however, to be valuable and important, and I know that truth never can be injured by honest and fearless discussion. There are a few passages possessing a general similarity to some in the preceding pages. I had finished,

however, the composition of my own remarks before the arrival of those of my friend, and I thought it best to hazard a little apparent repetition, than to lose what I deem an advantage,—the coincidence of sentiments independently expressed.

"My Dear Sir,

"The problem proposed may be thus stated: *Of what modifications is the system of Congregationalism susceptible, that may adapt it to the general circumstances of society?*

"Dissenters have been too much engrossed with their perpetual contest with the Church, to take an enlarged view of the adaptation of their scheme of polity to society at large: and any person who should intimate a suspicion of the soundness of their principles, is considered at once as harbouring the treasonable intention of deserting to the enemy.

"The primary principles upon which Dissent is *founded*, I regard as incontrovertible. They are: 1. The sufficiency and exclusive authority of the Scriptures. 2. The consequent right of private judgement, as opposed to human authority in matters of faith. 3. Entire liberty of conscience, as regards the interference of the State. In reference to these three cardinal points, Dissent is but consistent Protestantism.

"But the scheme of Dissenting Polity, or Congregationalism, involves not merely these grand principles, but a certain set of opinions, which may perhaps be thus enumerated.

"1. The purely democratic form of Church government; the popular election of the pastor; the equality of all pastors; and the independence of every congregation.

"2. The existence of two officers only in the Churches; the bishop, or pastor, and the deacons, who have charge of the temporal concerns.

"3. The distinction between the Church, on the one hand, as a separate society or fellowship, consisting of persons willing to be subject to its rules and discipline; and, on the other, the bulk of the "hearers" or worshippers composing the congregation; also, the restriction of the Lord's Supper to the select Church.

"4. The system of voluntary contribution, and, generally speaking, the dependence of the minister for support upon such contributions.

"5. Substantially, the doctrines of the Westminster Confession as the basis of communion: to which may be added, the exclusion of liturgical forms.

"Waving the question, how far these secondary principles (as I would term them, in contradistinction to the primary principles of Protestantism) are Scriptural or not, they cannot claim to be regarded as incontrovertible; and a Dissenter may be suffered to entertain doubts as to their absolute correctness, without forfeiting his character as a sound Protestant. As opposed to diocesan Episcopacy, they may be the more correct and safer scheme of the two, without being absolutely in accordance with the Scriptural model. The points to which I wish to draw attention, as affording matter for dispassionate inquiry, are these.

"1. Can the Churches of the Congregational Dissenters, as consisting of small select associations of pious persons, agreeing in sentiment among themselves, but existing in the midst of general society, more or less Christian, and comprising a large number of persons equally pious, but of differing sentiments,—can such private voluntary associations be considered as bearing any analogy to the primitive Christian societies, which existed in the midst of heathenism, and included all the faithful in the place? Admitting the principle of voluntary association to be common to the primitive Churches and to modern Dissenting Churches, are not the circumstances so totally different as to change entirely the

relative position of such societies? A Church, existing in the midst of Christian society, but not including it, is *ecclesia in ecclesiâ*. Besides, it was not optional, in primitive times, whether a Christian should belong to the Church or not. If not, he was a heathen. But a man may be a sincere Christian, and yet not belong to a Dissenting Church—a pious worshipper of the congregation, and yet not a member of the Church. What have such Churches in common, *circumstantially*, with the primitive societies?

"2. Does the constitution of Independent Churches make any provision for the extension of Christianity? Indirectly, by allowing the liberty of prophesying, it may be said to do this: it *tolerates* the propagation of the Gospel, beyond any other system. But still it must be considered as making no direct provision; since, 1. the theory* recognizes no such *office* as that of the missionary, allowing only bishops and deacons: 2. It recognizes no authority that should send forth missionaries: 3. It presupposes a congregation, calling forth and choosing a minister, before any minister can be appointed to a local charge: 4. It makes no provision for the support of the missionary or itinerant. All that has been done, therefore, by Congregationalists, has been by means of specific societies or associations, having no connexion with their system of Church polity, and acting in many respects at palpable variance with it. For, 1. The missionary is not elected by either the people to whom he is sent, or by any other Church, but is appointed by a council, board, or committee. 2. He is an ordained officer, yet is neither bishop nor deacon. 3. He is a recognized minister of the Church of Christ, yet not a minister of a particular Church. 4. He is not independent and irresponsible,

* That the Missionary Society did not originate with the Independents, although now chiefly supported by them, is notorious; but its very constitution was at variance with strict Independency.

but accountable to a board of directors, and subject to oversight. A Missionary Society is an institution of Christ, or it is not. If not, if it rests only on expediency, how can it be pretended that we are adhering to a perfect model? If it may be reconciled with the Scripture model, then Congregationalism, from which this institution is foreign, cannot be identified with the primitive model.

"3. Has Independency proved adequately efficient to meet the wants of society at home? It seems to me that the rise and progress of Wesleyanism affords an historical proof of its limited efficiency. Wesleyanism, as well as Congregationalism, has had to make way against the influence of an Establishment; but the former has shewn a power of propagating itself, far superior to the energies of the latter scheme. All that has been done of late years by the building of private chapels, as well as by County Unions, Associations, and Home Missionary Societies, must be regarded as supplementary to the scheme of Independency, and as originating with individual zeal, rather than emanating from the principles of Congregational polity.

"4. What relation has an academical system to the Congregational polity? The fitness of that system is not questioned, but it has grown up in modern times, and has been superinduced upon Independency. Yet, our Churches have, as such, no connexion with these schools of the prophets. The committees which try the candidates for the ministry, and virtually admit them, and send them forth, are not an ecclesiastical body. The tutor, whose office it is to commit the doctrine of Christ to these future ministers, is not, as such, an officer of the Church. Here is, then, a Christian institution of the highest importance and responsibility, unconnected with the frame-work of our Church polity.

"5. How does Independency propose to deal with those whom its discipline deters from joining its asso-

ciations, or whom it places without its pale? Under existing circumstances, the whole of the higher ranks, the greater portion of the professional classes, vast numbers of the mechanical classes; in short, the bulk of society, good and bad, stand without the pale of Congregationalism. If not excluded, they *elude* the operation of the system, which takes no cognizance of those whom it does not, with their own consent, embrace. Christianity reached all by its authority, embraced all by its provisions: its character is universality. Do our institutions approximate to this character of authoritative claim and universality? Is not their fundamental principle, separation from the world, a principle of repulsion, rather than of attraction; and is not its operation, when adopted as the exclusive principle, adverse to the extension of Christianity? May we not have erred by constructing our Churches too much on the basis of a monastic separation, and by making our ecclesiastical institutions do, or attempt to do, what can be practically realized only by our personal conduct in the social intercourse of life. At all events, supposing our Churches to be founded upon Scriptural rules; if Independency, as a system, does not look beyond them,—does not take cognizance of the mass of the several congregations of which they are but the nucleus,—does not bring its operations to bear upon the vast majority of Christian society, can it be the form in which Christianity is destined to become the religion of the world?

"Nothing seems to me clearer, than that the primitive Churches comprehended the whole of Christian society. 'Those who were without,' were not Christians even in profession. Circumstances being so materially changed, expediency may dictate a change of proceeding; but still the difference must not be lost sight of. The Independent Church is *a select class*. The parochial Church is a territory with so much population. Because one is wrong, it does not follow that the other is right. Could the two

systems be so far blended, by grafting classification and discipline upon the parochial principle, as to comprise the whole population of the district within its charge, without confounding all distinctions of character, there would be a nearer approach to the primitive model.

"It must not be forgotten, that diocesan episcopacy grew out of the primitive episcopacy, and, like all corruptions, had an origin better than itself. The gradual deterioration mainly affected the following points:—

"1. The conversion of the Christian ministry into a sacerdotal order, 'a caste of priests, in contradistinction to the evangelical notion of the Christian priesthood.' (See Neander.) And, in connexion with this, the sacramental superstition, and the distinction between the spirituality and the laity.

"2. The conversion of the *episcopus episcoporum*, or president of the presbyters, who was originally only *primus inter pares*, into a different order; and what Neander calls 'the development of the monarchico-episcopal government,' by the enlargement of dioceses, and the invention of new dignitaries. The process has been admirably traced by Barrow, in his 'Treatise on the Papal Supremacy.'

"3. The union of spiritual and temporal power in the ecclesiastic.

"4. The depriving the people of any voice in the election of their pastor, and subsequently the presbyters of the right to elect their president.

"To these corruptions of primitive Episcopacy must be added:—

"5. The practice which substitutes a hired deputy, in the character of a curate, for the responsible minister.

"These seem the grand errors against which, so far as regards ecclesiastical polity merely, Dissenters are bound to protest and contend, and which forbid any amalgamation with a church adhering to these corruptions.

"On the other hand, if called upon to point out the

defects or weak points in the Congregational theory, I should be inclined to specify as such:—

"1. Inadequate or erroneous views of the genuine authority attaching to the office of pastor.

"2. A total misconception as to the office of deacon, which, without the shadow of scriptural evidence, is identified with that of the seven officers chosen to superintend the daily ministration. Acts vi.

"3. Limiting the officers of the Church to two sorts, pastors and deacons, to the exclusion of subordinate or assistant teachers, itinerants, catechists, missionaries, and academic teachers, who are equally officers of Christ's Church.

"4. Rejecting all gradation of classes within the Church.

"5. Overlooking the relation of stated *hearers* to their recognized teacher, and of stated worshippers to the Church.

"6. Overlooking the responsibility of the Church in regard to the *Pagan* or rural population within its diocese.

"7. Disregarding the unlawfulness of schism, as chargeable upon any two churches in the same district, not mutually recognizing each other.

"8. The want of any central authority, such as even the most democratic system admits of, and which is necessary, not merely as an outward bond of union, but to render any salutary reforms practicable; the rejection, in fact, of any general organization. Even county associations are of modern date, and only partially adopted. The proposed plan of a Congregational Union is an acknowledgment of the deficiency which it seeks to remedy.

"With regard to the mistaken views relating to the deacon's office, I would offer the following remarks:—

"1. The seven referred to in Acts vi. were a committee of management, not answering at all to the deacons of

the Epistles, if we may judge from the qualifications required in the latter, nor chargeable, so far as appears, with the support of the ministry.

"2. The identification of elder, deacon, and trustee in the same officer, which in fact prevails, is an abuse analogous to the mixture of secular and spiritual functions in the Clergy; whereas the design of the appointment of the SEVEN was, to separate those functions.

"3. Ought the same hands to collect the subscriptions, to distribute the alms of the Church, and to administer the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper? Is this becoming or expedient? Ought the seat-rent collector or tithe-gatherer to be the pastor's spiritual assistant?

"4. It is often said, that the deacon's office is purely secular. This is notoriously contrary to fact. If it were true, we want other officers. Why do they preside in spiritual matters?

"The pastor ought to nominate his deacons; *i. e.* his assistants in governing and visiting the church; and with them he ought to have no money transactions. Nor ought the purse to be in their hands. On the other hand, those who are entrusted with the secular business ought to be elected by the people. Were the secular concerns of a church managed by a committee so chosen, the trust would be less liable to get into the hands of an individual, and there would be less difficulty in finding proper persons for the office of deacon. With us, matters are absurdly reversed. Trustees are rarely chosen by the people; while deacons, the pastor's deputies, are popularly elected, so as to be independent of his control. Half the disorders in Congregational churches are attributable to this blunder. What is still more strange, the pastor is, in many cases, less stationary,—more easily removable than the deacon; and with all the ultra-democratic jealousy betrayed in other parts of the system, the deacon is chosen for life, when he ought, as being concerned in secular matters, to be chosen annually, like the churchwarden.

" Perhaps it may be said with truth, that the theoretic errors of the Congregational system are far greater than the practical evils; while, in the system from which we dissent, the practical errors are more palpable and serious than the theoretic ones. But Dissenters have been apt to pride themselves upon their most vulnerable points, and have not always attacked the Church of England where it is weakest and most incapable of defence.

" Now what would I suggest, it may be asked, as a remedy for these alleged defects and errors? If all parties are wrong, (which I conscientiously believe to be the case,) would I inculcate indifference as to which party an individual should join, or recommend the formation of a new sect? Certainly not the former; and as to the latter, a sect can be made only by a leader,—a Luther or Wesley, a Penn or Sandeman.

" Circumstances, however, render it not altogether improbable that a new sect may be formed by extensive secessions from the Episcopal Church. They would have been already more numerous, had the seceders found a body with which they could unite. For want of this, the seceding Clergyman finds himself placed in a predicament of the most trying and painful kind, and one not unattended with moral peril. Conscientiously retaining, it may be, an attachment to the Episcopal government, and to the liturgy and ritual of the church he has left, and not prepared to embrace at once the democratic constitution of Congregational churches, or to submit to the rule of " Conference," he feels himself alone, unsupported, or coolly greeted as an imperfect convert to a system he cannot approve. If he has talents that command popularity, he may become an Independent *par excellence;* but he will then be in imminent danger of becoming, if not an heresiarch, a self-sufficient, isolated, spiritual demagogue,—the autocrat of his little circle.

" With Congregationalists, seceding Episcopalians can never be expected to unite. Neither Wesley nor Whitfield found it possible to unite with them; and Wesleyanism grew into a sect by a sort of necessity. In itself, a new sect would be an evil; but the evil would be greatly mitigated, if not altogether obviated, if there should be an entire and cordial recognition of each other on the part of those who differed on points of discipline and ritual. If the Episcopal Dissenter, the Congregational Dissenter, and the Wesleyan would unite, *before the world*, in testifying their unity in essentials, by opening to each other their pulpits and their communion, and by coalescing in all plans for the evangelization of society, they would, while retaining their differences, lose the character of sects.

" Upon this point, I feel irresistibly tempted to transcribe a few sentences from the letter of an eminent friend. ' My belief settles daily into greater firmness, that the power of preaching will not develop itself, till parties are molten down, and a One Church shines out before the world: or that the two events will be simultaneous. It does not seem to me, that any body *feels* this in force, or is willing to believe it. My feeling and confidence are so mighty, that I could stand up in the front of Christendom, congregated to deny it, and alone protest for the truth. Our ideas on all subjects are clouded and perverted by our adherence to the principle of faction. This, my dear friend, is not cynical, and captious, and splenetic; but a deep, full, and calm conviction,—slowly formed, often revolved, often dismissed, and again forcibly recovered. The truth on this great subject is just like every other great truth, too simple and obvious to draw any notice until the moment comes for all men to awake to a sense of it.'

" There is nothing in the practice of Dissenters, perhaps, so entirely inexcusable as the separation of Pædobaptists and Anti-Pædobaptists into two distinct denominations, upon the ground of a difference on one solitary, disputed point, not affecting a single article of the Christian faith. Expediency, which, on other occasions, Dissenters warmly repudiate, can alone be pleaded in defence of what I cannot

but believe to be both inexpedient and unlawful. The extent to which the principle of free communion has of late been diffusing itself, is a great point gained; and the cordial manner in which the ministers of the two denominations coalesce, does them honour. But these circumstances will tend either to break down the wall of partition between the two denominations altogether, or to render its preservation inexcusable.

"Differences are lawful; sects are unlawful. As there is but one Gospel, there ought to be but one communion:—'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' Let this be taken as the fundamental principle of Congregationalism, and it will cease to partake of the narrowness and feebleness of a sect; it will become attractive of all that is good, instead of repulsive towards much that it ought to appropriate to itself, and will become the most comprehensive church *in the Church*.

"To conclude these somewhat desultory hints.—If Independents, in these days of general reform, blindly and tenaciously adhere to all their errors, they will be of all men the most inexcusable. No bodies of men, however, as such, reform themselves. If a dozen Christian ministers, with one accord, would, in their several spheres, commence the reforms they should deem desirable and practicable, and, after a time, publish their reasons and the results, the work would rapidly go forward. With the concurrence of their respective congregations, they have all in their own hands; and if they maintain, with all sincerity, and forbearance, and kindness, the principle of catholicity, they will hazard no fresh schism by their innovations. Congregational union will be a salutary and excellent measure, if it is attended by, and does not preclude, Congregational reform. 'Peace be upon all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!'

"With much esteem and regard, I remain,

"My dear Sir,

"Your's, very faithfully,

"_____."

"P. S. The passage in Lardner (relative to the use of the word Church) to which I referred in our last conversation, occurs at p. 257, vol. vii. of the octavo edition.

"'And who is there,' says Origen, 'who must not acknowledge that the worst of those who are in the Church, and who are inferior to the rest, are better than most of those who are in the churches of the people? For instance, the church of God at Athens is quiet, mild, and well-behaved, being desirous to approve itself to God who is over all. But the church of the Athenians is turbulent, and by no means comparable to the church of God there. The same you must also acknowledge of the church of God at Corinth, and the church of the people of the Corinthians; as you must also allow of the church of God at Alexandria, and the church of the people of the Alexandrians. And if you will observe the senate of the Church of God, and the senate in every city, you will find some senators of the Church worthy to govern in the city of God, all over the world, if there were such a thing. And if you should compare the presidents of the churches of God with the presidents of the people in the cities, you will find the senators and governors of the churches, though some may be inferior to others who are more perfect, nevertheless you will find them to excel in virtue the senators and governors of the cities.' Compare this language with the following expressions: Ὁ προϊστάμενος, ἐν σπουδῇ. Rom. xii. 8.—Πείθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπείκετε. Heb. xiii. 17.—Πῶς ἐκκλησίας Θεοῦ ἐπιμελήσεται. 1 Tim. iii. 5.—Ἀντιλήψεις, κυβερνήσεις. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Would it not seem that there were functions and functionaries in the primitive churches, of a somewhat different character from our two officers?"

THE END.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.